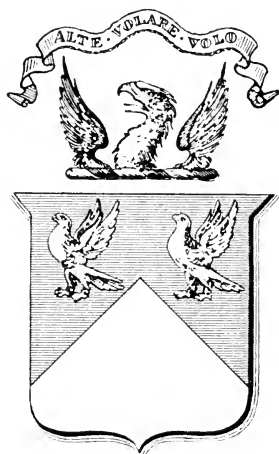


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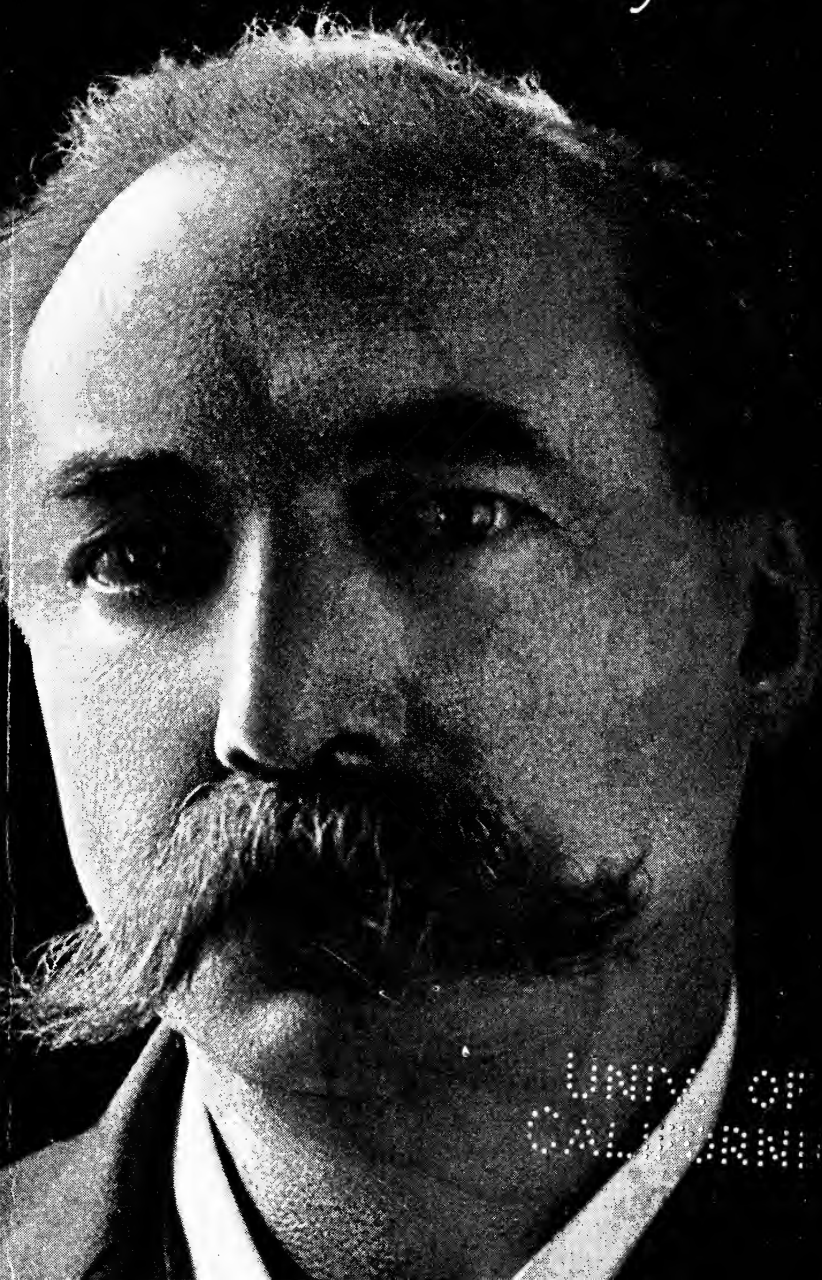
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By
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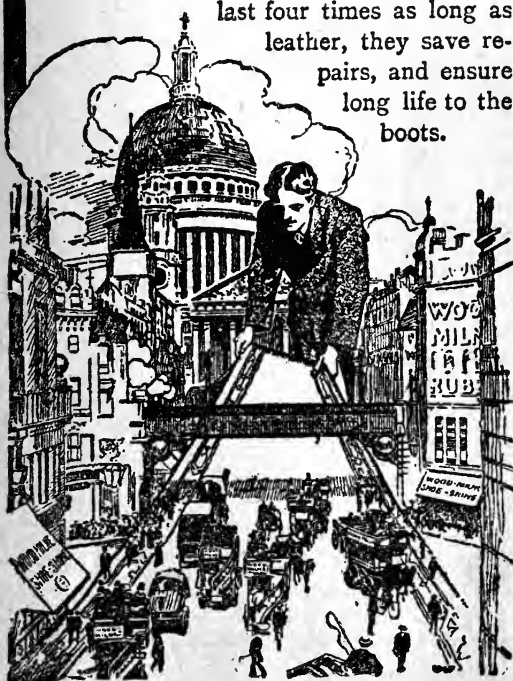
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MY LIFE IN THE ARMY

By ROBERT BLATCHFORD

I.

MYSELF WHEN YOUNG.

I *had* to go for a soldier : it was written. Was not my godfather one Wyatt of the 10th Hussars ; and did he not carry me to the font in his arms, with my head against his glorious frogged jacket, the plume of his busby towering above me, his spurs clanking on the flagged aisle, and his pelisse—pride of the ladies' hearts—keeping the draughts from my devoted feet ?

And then, my first recollections are of the grim Crimean War. For we stayed very often in garrison towns ; and my mother's people had friends who were officers in the Army. Quite well I can remember—I must have been between three and four years old—a regiment of cavalry starting for the war ; and I can remember, or think I can, some wounded soldiers landing, and a wee drummer-boy being carried ashore in a blanket.

And, again, the officers, after the war was over, came often to our house ; and I heard them talk of camp and battle, and divers strange matters.

And yet, again, I lived in Portsmouth all through one beatific summer, when I spent all my leisure time on the fortifications, or witnessing sham fights on Southsea Common, or watching gun drill on the walls, or infantry manœuvres in the barrack squares. And my toys were soldiers ; and I fought battles with battalions of buttons ; and I fell, running after a military band, and broke my collar-bone. And one

happy day a red-faced private of the Rifle Brigade sent me to a public-house to beg a clay pipe for him, and I was allowed to pass the sentry and to walk up the steps of the guard-room, and I was shaken hands with by the rifleman, and went home prouder than any alderman.

BOYHOOD DAYS.

Besides, I saw the troops embark for the Mutiny from Gravesend, and the marines march off for the China War from Fratton. And our people were always talking soldier and sailor, and army and fleet; and my uncle was at the siege of Bomarsund; and my grandfather was wounded on Nelson's ship at the Nile; and I knew a boy whose uncle fought at the Alma, and had a wooden leg to prove it. And, so there, as Henry James would say, "we beautifully are."

And the consequence was that when in the year 1871 I found myself cast away upon London's golden pavements, with no visible means of subsistence—— But let us not anticipate.

I must say here, for the reader's better understanding, that I was a silent, romantic, imaginative boy, and a great dreamer of day-dreams. Going stolidly about my work at the brush-shop I looked at my workmates, and especially the girls, through the tinted spectacles of a born idealist and romanticist. I made Elaines and Guineveres out of bright-eyed, matter-of-fact, downright Yorkshire lasses; and while my bodily ego was engaged in the construction of scrubbing-brushes, or the dressing of hogs' bristles, my astral person was hunting goats on Crusoe's island, or picking up diamonds in Sinbad's valley, or cutting out privateers with Peter Simple. Steeped to the lips in songs and stories, deeply read in "British Battles by Land and Sea," I was often absent-minded while the sermon was getting itself preached in our Nonconformist chapel, and was certainly not much interested in acquiring what my indentures called "the art and mystery of brushmaking."

So that is the kind of boy I was on May 8th, 1871, when, being then in my twenty-first year, I stood on a bleak hill-side in the thin sunshine, and looked down, and back, at the hundred dirty chimney shafts of Halifax, standing up, like branchless black pines, out of a sea of smoke and smother.

LOVE OF THE ARMY.

I had been nine years in Halifax; but now I was leaving. I had a dull, sad time behind me, the world before me, and the sum of one penny in my pocket. But I was just turned

twenty, I loved adventure, and it was a fine May morning. As I stood there on the hill I was conscious that the fairyland of the future began on the other side of that rocky shoulder. I realised that I was not only leaving Halifax and home, but that I was stepping into the first chapter of a new story. Yes, that is the fact; life to me has been always a great story-book, unfolding page after page, each chapter bringing with it a new interest, a fresh possibility of adventure; the meeting with new and unexpected characters.

I smacked my lips that morning as I turned the first page; and I turned my back on the closed book, and hurried on with hungry eagerness to the next.

What would it be? Who would they be? Oh, the red wine of life!

That is nigh forty years ago; but I have never lost the zest. The world is still for me a treasure-house of character and story; I continue to travel the enchanted road, like Christian in the "Pilgrim's Progress," with ever fresh amusement, or delight, or surprise at the beauty or wildness of the road, the mysteries of the Valley of the Shadow, the glamour of the distant Delectable Hills; the endless variety of the women and the men I met with in the Guest House, or at the parting of the ways.

I make this confession to the reader as a hint of warning. If I am to tell him of the Army, I beg he will bear in mind that it is *my* Army: the Army as I saw it with my own eyes.

I can see, as in a glass darkly, that to the man in the street the Army is a thing radically different from my Army. Perhaps that man in the street imagines it as a dull routine, a tyranny of iron discipline, a soulless round of pipeclay and beer and goose-step. To him my dear old Tommy Atkins is an uneducated, unintelligent, wooden automaton who soaps his hair, kisses servant-girls, revels in bad beer, and treats the King's English as ruthlessly as the King's enemies.

Well, I have cautioned the reader about my idealism and my dramatic view of life; and he may take my description with a grain of salt or without it.

I love the Army; and I love old Tommy Atkins.

I love the scarlet, and the fife and drum.

I love the high-road, and the tramp of feet.

I love a rifle as one loves a living thing.

I was happy in the Army.

I am glad to have been a soldier, even for a little while. I am proud of it.

When I enlisted, the gorgeous and mighty Carabineer from whom I took the shilling assured me as he curled his wonderful

moustaches and slapped his puissant back with his riding-whip: "You will never regret entering the Service, boy." There were days when I doubted it; but it was a true saying. I never did regret it. I got nothing but good by it. I really don't know how much I owe to it.

II.

THE SPLENDID SHILLING.

I walked from Yarmouth to London—a hundred and twenty-three miles, I think it was—in bright May weather, and through the first green pleasant country I had seen since I was ten years of age. And I tramped the streets of modern Babylon, lonely and wondering in the crowd, and found, as Mr. Micawber found, that a man of my abilities was not required. Finally I found myself on June 1st, with empty pockets and an aching void where my dinner should have been, walking slowly past the Houses of Parliament.

It was then and there I met my fate, in the form of Sergeant Thomas Ison, of the 6th Dragoon Guards, the Carabineers. A fine man was Thomas; tall, lithe, muscular, handsome; straight as a lance, clean as a star, proud as Lucifer.

"Well, young man," said he, looking not at me but straight before him, "how do you think a soldier's life would suit you?"

I replied that I knew very little about it; upon which, addressing the white clouds above St. James's Park, he said: "The finest career for a smart, educated, superior young man like you: the very finest career."

I asked was that his serious opinion.

He slapped his back with his whip, curled his black moustache, like Porthos, and assured a sulky-looking chimney-stack that, damme, it was no part of his duty to deceive any lad; that, now the short-service Act was passed, a really superior young man might enjoy a six years' picnic at her Majesty's expense; that we were getting a superior class of recruits now; *quite* a superior class; that the uniform, dammit, was the proper dress for a man; and the irresistible magnet for the women; that purchase was abolished, and any fine young fellow might win a commission; and that as I appeared to be a really very superior person indeed, what did I say to a drink at the King's Arms, while he ran the tape over me.

I accepted the invitation, and as we made our way to the King's Arms, Charles Street, Westminster, Porthos promised

to do me the great honour of introducing me to some of the superior young men who had just enlisted.

He then said that, of course, I should join the cavalry; that it was the thing for a gentleman, and that he reckoned I was just about five feet six, which would entitle me to the felicity of joining the Hussars.

When I said I was only five feet five the gallant sergeant, without a blush, congratulated the upper windows of a shop upon the fact.

"So much the better," said he. "You shall have your pick of seventy crack infantry regiments—best in the Service. Far easier life than cavalry life. More time to spare; no brute beast for a master."

Arrived at the King's Arms, I was introduced to the superior young gentlemen, and I am afraid we were not too favourably impressed with each other. Superior young gentlemen they might have been, cheerful young gentlemen they did not seem; clean young gentlemen, they were not. But Porthos was proud of them. Porthos assured the portrait of a tall, lean person in tight breeches, a flat hat, a high-waisted coat, and Prince Albert's whiskers that it was a pleasure to a non-commissioned officer to feel that he had secured for the Service so many superior recruits, and that as soon as he had run the tape over me he was morally certain that I should, so to speak, fill his cup to the brim, by, as he put it, "accepting her Majesty's 'Robert' (God bless her!) and making a man of myself."

Her Majesty's "Robert," reinforced by three days' pay, at one-and-fourpence a day, was peculiarly welcome to me, as I imagine it had been to the dejected young aristocrats who now sat drinking cheap porter out of pewter pots, or smoking rank tobacco out of cutty clays.

So the tape was run over me, to the intense gratification of the magnificent Carabineer; and after I had answered several questions, as a guarantee of good faith, and had promised to meet Porthos at ten o'clock on Monday morning at St. George's Barracks, the splendid shilling was put into my hand, and I drank the health of the Queen in stone ginger-beer, and shook hands on the bargain.

It was then the sergeant made his prophetic speech. Looking straight over my head, closing his heels, and laying his white-gloved hand on my shoulder, Sergeant Thomas Ison uttered these remarkable words: "You will never regret entering the Service, boy." I said I hoped not; and the sergeant, flicking his whip in the direction of the superior young gentlemen, went stamping and jingling downstairs

and out into Charles Street in search of more superior food for powder.

I was about to follow him when one of the young gentlemen addressed me. "Blimey, mate," he said, "you don't look 'appy. 'Aven't you 'listed for the line?" I said I had.

"Then," said he, "*you're* all right. You'll 'ave a gentleman's life. No stable call; no ridin' drill. *I'm* for the blinkin' 'Ussars. Blest if I 'aven't a good mind to do a bunk."

"You needn't do no bunk," said a red-haired youth with a muffler round his neck; "he'll swap yer, if yer arsk 'im."

"Swap me!" exclaimed the other young gentleman. "No blinkin' fear! Think I'm goin' to walk when I can ride?"

"What!" said a third young aristocrat. "You on an 'orse? I say, chaps, imagine Bleary on an 'orse. Oh, Gord!"

"I shall 'ave 'im," said the first young gentleman, "and I'll ride up 'Olborn, proud as Punch, an' when I comes to old Bogey's a la mode beef shop I shall go in an' kiss his ginger-'aired daughter, an' if he serves me any of 'is lip I shall cut 'is 'ead off wiv my sword."

"*Your* sword," said the third patrician. "*'Is* sword; Bleary's sword. Oh, Gord!"

The concept of Bleary in gorgeous raiment, mounted on horseback, and armed with a sword, appeared to depress the company severely. They fell back into moody silence, and I went away.

III.

SOLDIERS OF THE QUEEN.

My only night in the receiving-room at St. George's Barracks was the first of a series of surprises. I was taken by the orderly on the gate to a sergeant, whose broad, square figure and mottled face reminded me of Henry the Eighth. His Majesty marched me up a stone staircase, opened a door, and saying: "You'll find a bed in there," left me to my fate.

Here was a great bare room, with bed-cots down each side, as in a hospital ward, and gas-lights flaring overhead. Most of the beds were occupied, for it was near "Tattoo," and the occupants were chattering and larking and using language which made me feel physically sick.

I looked about for a cot, and found one vacant right opposite the door. This I took; and after examining the brown blankets and the hard straw mattress I half-undressed myself and prepared to sleep.

But sleep, I soon discovered, was not the general idea. Not half the cots had pillows, and the understanding arrived at by the gentlemen of the room was that directly "Lights out" sounded a general attack should be made on the room across the corridor, and as many pillows as possible should be carried off.

Presently the bugle sounded, the men filed out silently into the corridor. A few seconds later the battle began and raged furiously, our men returning loaded with spoil and locking the door behind them.

After this all was quiet, and many of us went to sleep. But about midnight the gentlemen from the other side, finding that their key opened our door, paid us a return visit. My cot being in the direct line of advance, I was turned over, buried among struggling enemies, and deprived of my blankets, my pillow, and most of my clothes before I was properly awake.

This battle was fought in the dark, and was decided by a concerted charge of the men on the other side of our room, the enemy being routed, chased to their own quarters, and left almost pillowless. While this victory was being won, I, being something of a philosopher, collected a good supply of bedding, made up a nest behind the door, and turned in.

About six o'clock I was awakened by an unwonted din. The sun was shining through the windows, the drums and fifes were playing on the parade, and the fat sergeant, nearly filling up the doorway, was addressing us in a voice more powerful than sweet.

"Come, come, gentlemen, gentlemen," said the fat sergeant, "don't oversleep yourselves. The chocolate will be cold; the eggs will be hard; and the colonel will be tired waiting to have the pleasure of your company." Having thus delivered himself, the fat sergeant walked into the room, and said, in a deep and solemn voice: "Yes, by Jasus!"

"Please, sergeant," said a snub-nosed youth, lifting his head from the blankets, "is the bath warm?"

SWORN IN.

Then the sergeant opened his shoulders and spake his mind. I had never heard a sergeant speak his mind before, and I was impressed.

"By God's rattle," said the fat sergeant, "the sun's burnin' holes in your blankets. Rouse about, you insanitary frequenters of the casual ward. Turn out, you gutter rats, you unchristened sons of mendicants. Bless your eyes! bless your souls! God bless you!"—or words to that effect.

We turned out like one man. The sergeant's eloquence was

very convincing. Thence to the common wash-house for a cold swill—a very cold swill—and thence to doctor's inspection, and another surprise.

"Come on, kid," said the fat sergeant to me, "go into that room and strip, and wait for orders." I went into the room, and saw to my astonishment some forty or fifty young men as naked as mermaids, squatting on the floor or leaning against the walls, conversing with a well-bred ease which filled me with envious admiration. However, in Rome—I had just got undressed when a foxy-faced corporal in blue serge entered the room and shouted:

"Fall in another forty of you!"

We fell in, and were marched across the corridor, passing another contingent, in a like state of innocence, coming out of the doctor's room.

Arrived in that room the recruits for the cavalry were drawn up on one side; those for the infantry on the other. There were two doctors, and one walked slowly down each line, looking keenly at the men as they went.

Every now and then a doctor would stop, ask a curt question or so, and then say: "Fall out." That meant that some poor fellow was rejected.

Of our forty perhaps six were refused. Two of these were fine young men, enlisted for the Lancers. One of them asked the doctor if he would mind saying why they were rejected.

The doctor looked at him sharply.

"Don't you know?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"H'm!" the doctor shrugged his shoulders. "Hernia," said he; "you would be dead in a month." And he walked on.

It was soon over. And then we dressed and passed the colonel, and were marched to a police-court and sworn in. The court was crowded, and a woman was giving evidence against her husband for assault. The corporal herded us together, and we held on to a greasy Prayer-book tied with string while the clerk gabbled over some speech of which we understood not a word but the beginning: "You shall well and truly swear," and the end, which was: "S'elp you God! kiss the book; usher, pull down the window; silence in court; woman, look at his worship when he speaks to you; next lot."

And we were soldiers, and entitled to be dealt with under the Mutiny Act and the Articles of War, and were sworn to defend a grateful country at the rate of sixteenpence a day, including beer money, and with deductions for groceries.

"Now, you devils," said the corporal, "fall in. By the left, quick march."

I did not sleep in barracks that night, but treated myself to a more sure and firm-set pillow. The next morning Sergeant Ison gave us his blessing, repeated his assurance that we should never regret entering the Service, and we were marched across Hungerford Bridge, fourteen of us, to catch the train for Southampton.

IV.

JOINING THE COLOURS.

It is very nearly thirty-eight years since I joined the colours, but I can remember every incident of the day very vividly. At Waterloo Station the officials seemed to regard us as they might a troop of monkeys. They met us with smiles of contemptuous amusement, put us into a sort of cattle-box with a seat down the centre, and locked us up.

Presently one of the recruits, who was looking out of the window, called out :

"Hallo, Rorty, 'ere's your donah!" Upon which the gentleman addressed as Rorty rushed to the window amid a chorus of congratulations, and embraced a young lady who stood on the step.

She was a thin, frail little creature, not a day over fifteen, and had mouse-coloured hair and wistful pale-blue eyes. She threw her arms round the neck of her lover and kissed him many times. She seemed an affectionate child, but her conversation was restricted to little more than two speeches :

"Ow, now, yer down't sye," and "When are you comin' back to *me*, my dearie?"

Rorty asked her for a lock of her hair, and she let him cut some off with a penknife. Then the other boys asked for tokens, and she cut off a long curl and bade them divide it. At last, when the whistle blew, she gave her lover a farewell kiss, and then kissed all the rest, one after another—except one. I was the one.

As the train moved out she stood waving a small and rather dirty handkerchief, and the boys struck up the chorus of a music-hall song, popular in those ancient times. The refrain, the air of which was very plaintive and rather pretty, went thus :

"Up in the Monument ever so high ;
Up in the Monument touching the sky ;
Up in the Monument a pleasant day is spent ;
The cheapest place for courting is the Monument."

Not a very appropriate song for a lovers' parting; but it served well enough, for it made us all feel sad, and it was easy to sing.

On the way our company indulged in singing and conversation. I remember one youth uttering a surmise as to how we should like soldiering, and another remarking that he did not care, as, after the dragging up he had had and the home he had left, he was prepared to face anything.

Then a swarthy, thick-set young man said:

"Now, I had a good 'ome. Nobody could have a better 'ome than mine. I kept white mice and rabbits and pigeons in my bedroom, and two dogs in the cellar. And if I'd stopped out late and got the sun in my eyes, I could go to bed with my boots on, just as if I was a lord, and not a word said about it."

BARGAINS IN CLOTHING.

This picture of Arcadian bliss struck the audience into a state of silent admiration for a while, but at last a youth named Mostyn asked ingeniously: "If you 'ad such a home as that, what did you leave it for?"

The answer was cryptic: "'Cos I bloomin' well 'ad to, Joe. See?" We did not see, but we were too much the gentleman to intrude any farther upon such delicate ground.

Now I should explain that outside the gates of St. George's Barracks there dwelt a cunning Israelite known by the slang name of "Ikey Mo," who was a dealer in second or third hand clothing. This person, reputed to be fabulously rich, was in the habit of buying from recruits their decent raiment—when they had any—and giving them, along with the purchase money, some very second-hand garments in exchange.

"You'll not want your clothin' when you get to the regiment," he would say, "and you will want money. Now I'll give you a very nice rig-out and two bob for your things as they stand." The apparent result of this trade was that, with one exception, our draft had the appearance of a community of "Weary Willies." And, to quote Falstaff, I should not have been surprised if some "mad fellow had met us by the way" and asked our one respectable companion if he "had unloaded all the gibbets and pressed the dead bodies." This one exception was a youth named Firwood, who not only wore a quite decent suit, but also dared the gods by sporting a tall silk hat.

This hat was a provocation—a challenge. But as its wearer was a stranger, we did for a long while restrain our just resentment and restrict our indignation to a few gibes

and sniggers. But at Southampton we called on our way to the pier at a tavern for lunch. Here some of the boys had some beer, and when, as the Fates willed it, Firwood's hat fell off as we started to run for the steamer, Joe Mostyn succumbed to the temptation and kicked it. That was too much. The offending hat was made a football, and was chased all down the road to the pier by a dozen mad ragamuffins, each holding a lump of bread in one hand and a lump of cheese in the other. Firwood followed, expostulating, but to no avail. The hat was kicked on to the steamer and over into the water, and its owner joined the colours bareheaded.

THE COLOUR-SERGEANT'S SCORN.

On the pier at Cowes we were met by a rather supercilious colour-sergeant, who eyed us with cold scorn, said, "Come on, you," and, turning his back upon us, stalked haughtily away.

It was a four-mile walk from Cowes to Parkhurst, and all the way our escort kept a little in front of us and spake no word. I am sure he suffered agonies, and that he did his utmost to convey the impression that we did not belong to him. But his bearing seemed to shout the words: "If I be not ashamed of my soldiers I am a soused gurnet." And I don't believe a single person passed by us on the road who failed to understand the situation or to enjoy its humour.

At last, to the general relief, a big iron gate became visible beyond some trees, and a tall sentry in black busby and scarlet stood to the shoulder and gazed at us with a kind of wooden amusement.

Now the colour-sergeant bade us pull ourselves together, and not roll in like a flock of sheep; whereat, to his no small astonishment, we promptly formed fours and marched past the guard-room in step. There were, as it appeared, only four of our fourteen who had not been in the Militia or the Volunteers.

The colour-sergeant marched us round to the orderly-room, and reported our arrival to the sergeant-major. The sergeant-major came out to look at us.

Now it was impossible to set eyes upon the sergeant-major without recognising him as a very uncommon man. He did not stand, nor walk, nor speak, nor move like an ordinary sergeant. He had a keen, alert, commanding personality. He was a born leader of men, and he knew it. I shall have more to say of him by-and-by.

The sergeant-major was a tall, slight man, in a peaked

cap and a blue patrol jacket. He stood with his hands in his jacket pockets, and a thin cane under his arm, and looked over us and through us, with a dull, dim eye which could see anything that could be seen by a hawk or a lynx.

"How many of 'em, colour-sergeant?" asked the sergeant-major.

"Fourteen, sir."

"Ha!" said the sergeant-major. "Pity you didn't lose half of them on the way. By God, the Service is coming to something! March them to the receiving-room, and hide them!"

With that the sergeant-major turned suddenly upon his heel and strode away with his long, quick stride, and his head held high. And I am quite sure there was not a man among us who did not wish that we had seen the last of him.

V.

LOVE AND WAR.

The next day, after a severe examination by the regimental doctor, who rejected two of our fourteen, we were posted to companies. Three of us—Mostyn, Firwood, and I—were posted to F Company, and were marched off by a little dapper corporal named Flynn.

Paddy Flynn, who was a clean, smart, and clever little soldier, had what he called a "sthrong wakeness"—the drink. In after years I saw him down on his knees by his cot, catching pink rats in a basin; and I remember his once fetching me out of the sergeants' mess because the devil was sitting on his cleaning bag, and he could not get ready for guard. But on the occasion of our first meeting he was as smart as mustard.

"Your name's Firwood, is it?" he said to the hatless recruit. "What the devil have ye done wid yere hat?"

"I lost it, corporal."

"Lost it! 'Tis the great big pity yere head was not in it, me jool, for it looks as if 'twould be small use to a soldier!"

"And what's your name, boy?"

"Blatchford, corporal."

"Blatchford! Sure, that's a quare name. Ye have a shootin' eye, Blatchford, but ye jump in yere stride. God's love, man, don't fly—don't fly!"

"And your name is Mostyn. 'Tis the big mouth ye have,

Mostyn. Shure 'tis a mouth like the Bolan Pass! And yere boots! Howly Moses, where did ye get thim boots?"

"I bought 'em, corporal."

IN BARRACKS.

"Ah, well! A fool and his money. They're an ignorant pair of boots. They turn up at the toes. 'Tis not dacent to see 'em showing their teeth in that way. By the by, Firwood, get yer hair cut."

"I don't like it short, corporal."

"What? Phwat?" The corporal stopped as if he had been shot. "Ye—ye don't like it short?" he said, in a dazed way—"ye don't like it short? Och! Saints in heaven! Och! The devil!" And the corporal put his hands to his sides and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

Spluttering, choking, and stamping, Paddy Flynn turned into the second of a line of huts, and called upon the boys to share this exquisite joke with him.

"The recruit—the bare-headed spalpeen wid the paper collar—he—he's afther saying he—he—don't like his hair short. He——"

We were naturally feeling very uncomfortable through this introduction, and turned all kinds of colours under the gaze of the soldiers in the room, when a stout corporal with a moustache like a toothbrush, and a nose like a bunch of blackberries, came forward and said: "Go to the devil out of this, Paddy Flynn, and stop your clack! Now, my lads," he continued kindly, "go and find your messes, and get your hair cut, all of you. There's no likes here. The first duty of a soldier is obedience."

A few minutes later I was back in the same room. The corporal was gone, and only two privates were present. One of these, a tall, very dark, and truculent-looking young man, after staring at me intently for some time, came and spoke me fairly.

"My name's Pompey," he said—"Pompey Pride. What's yours?" I told him.

"Very well," he said, "you are in this mess. There's a vacant cot next mine. Would you like to be my cot-mate?"

I did not feel enthusiastic, I'm afraid, but I said yes.

"Right," said Pompey; "but before you take up your cot, let's understand one another. Are you going to soldier, or are you going to act the goat?"

Guessing at his meaning, I said I meant to soldier.

Pompey nodded approval.

"That's the ticket," he said; "be a clean soldier, master

your drill, do your duty, and you needn't call the Queen your aunt. Will you start now?"

I said I would; and Pompey very kindly fetched me a set of belts, and showed me how to clean them. Very soon he had me briskly at work, and was talking to me as if he had known me for years.

"You have to learn to walk like a soldier, cot-mate," said he, "and to drill like a soldier, and dress like a soldier, and think like a soldier, and be a soldier. Don't put the pipeclay on thick. Do you drink? That's a good job; stick to that. I take a little myself, sometimes. You don't swear, I notice, cot-mate. It's a bad habit. But a few years in India makes a difference. I was out there six years. What can you do with the prickly heat? You must swear. By the way, what did you join the Service for?"

I said I did not quite know. I was out of work for one thing.

REGIMENTAL NICKNAMES.

"Ah," said Pompey, "but I don't think it's that. I suppose it's in the blood. You heard the drum, eh?"

"Heard the drum?"

"That's what they call it. When a man hears the drum calling he has to go. There's a devil in the drum, cot-mate."

At this point Pompey rose up, and laid down his belts, danced a step dance, sang a verse of a comic song, and then quietly returned to his work. This I soon found was a habit of his. All his conversation was, as it were, illustrated by bits of dancing and snatches of song.

Presently, as we were talking, some person invisible threw a potato into the room, and nearly hit Pompey on the head.

"Ah," he said coolly, as he dipped his sponge in the pipeclay, "that'll be Ginger Smith."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"Oh," he said, "Ginger generally shies a tater or something when he's passing, just to let me know he's going out in town."

"Is he a—a friend of yours?" I asked, rather perplexed by this unusual mode of signalling.

"Oh, we're tremendous pals," said Pompey; "went out in the same draft. Always been as thick as thieves—like two brothers. I've fought him three times."

"Indeed," said I, "and you are still friends?"

"Of course. Why not? But don't fight, cot-mate—not for pleasure. It's bad for the eyes."

So we chatted and got to know each other, until Pompey decided to dress and go out to look for Ginger.

"By the way," I said then, "why do you call him Ginger?"

"Red hair," said Pompey. "Must have a name; so many Smiths—

" ' If to sleep this nigger goes,
If to sleep this nigger goes.'

You see, cot-mate, there's so many Smiths. There's two Bill Smiths and three George Smiths in this company, besides mixed Smiths. So we call 'em by nicknames. There's Ginger Smith, with red hair; and Ruggy Smith, because he's pock-marked; and Tubby Smith, the fat one; and Boos Smith, the cock-eyed one; and Bandy Smith, and Third-class Smith, the third-class shot. See?

" ' If to sleep this nigger goes,
A fly come sting him on de nose.'

And now I'm going to walk out, cot-mate. So long."

LOVE, AND A FIGHT.

When Pompey left me I took a stroll round the lines, and then went to see the Retreat made on the parade. The drums were formed up, the drum-major in front. The bugles sounded the Retreat (sundown), and the drums and fifes played a quickstep and marched down the parade and back again.

It was a fine spring evening. The glow of the sunset cast the shadow of the trees in long blue lines across the red gravel, the homing rooks were trailing overhead in loose order, and the drums and fifes sounded quite soft and pretty as they marched away. The general effect was one of almost idyllic calm. I returned to my barrack-room, where I found a bandsman named Webb and a private named Peters, sitting on one of the beds side by side, discoursing of their loves.

"By the living Jingo, she's like waxwork," Webb was saying.

Peters winked his eyes, wavered unsteadily as he sat, and replied: "It's a pity she drinks."

"Drinks!" Webb sprang up and nearly overbalanced himself. "Drinks! She's a Sunday-school teacher, and you're a dirty Irish liar!"

So saying, the bandsman smote Peters on the mazzard, and knocked him off the bed. Having done this he staggered out of the room, and Peters, rising, rushed at me. But he

was not dangerous. I pushed him over again, and then explained that I was not a bandsman, and persuaded my comrade to go to bed.

Thus passed my first evening in the service of the Queen.

VI.

THE RAMCHUNDERS.

The Ramchunders, for so I shall call the regiment to which I had been posted, was an old "John Company" corps, and had been in India since its formation in the reign of Queen Anne.

The Ramchunders had now returned to England, with much hot sunshine in the blood and a good deal of money in their pockets, and at the time I joined were, in the words of their own argot, "going wide."

I have never known a regiment go wider. All, or nearly all, the men had money. Most of the privates had ten or twenty pounds each; some of the sergeants were said to have hundreds. This wealth had to be spent, and in the nick of time some three hundred Cockney recruits, as keen as knives and as hungry as wolves, turned up to help in the spending.

The game, while the money lasted, was "played quick." Every night the guard-room was crammed with prisoners; every day there was a whole company of defaulters at pack-drill on the square.

Nor was this the worst. The regiment had taken things easy in India, and was reported slack; and a sergeant-major with a couple of drill-sergeants had been transferred from the Guards to pull them together.

As the sergeant-major came with a theory that old Indian sergeants and corporals were no use to him, and as many of these old non-commissioned officers were "going wide," the result was a rapid succession of courts-martial, and the almost inevitable reduction of non-commissioned officers to the ranks.

The sergeant-major's right-hand men were a drill-sergeant, whom I will call Quex, and the regimental-provost-sergeant, Bonass, who had come home with the colours from India. Quex was a smart, good-humoured sergeant from the Guards, who said ditto to the "major," and did not let his conscience interfere with his interest. Bonass was an atavistic rascal, who ought to have been a slave-driver or a pirate, and never had any conscience to consider.

The method was simplicity itself. Quex, as assistant sergeant-major, and Bonass, as provost-sergeant, attended the sergeant-major on all Tattoo parades. At Tattoo the ten orderly sergeants, with their orderly corporals, attended to report after calling the roll of their companies. There were present, also, the barrack orderly sergeant and corporal, and the sergeants and corporals of the picket and canteen duties. In all, some thirteen sergeants and as many corporals.

The sergeant-major took the reports, which were given verbally. If he "wanted" a non-commissioned officer he would stop short in front of him and say :

"You've been drinking, sergeant."

"No, sir."

"Sergeant Quex, Sergeant Bonass, see this sergeant."

The two minions "saw" the sergeant, certified that he was "drunk, sir," and marched him off to his quarters under arrest.

If the colonel did not put the victim back for a court-martial the "major" bided his time, and tried again. The final result was the "smashing" of the fated non-commissioned officer.

The men were treated with much less ceremony. After Retreat, the main gate was closed, and all soldiers returning to barracks had to pass through a small gate. Here they had to run the gauntlet of the sergeant or corporal on gate duty, two men of the military police, the sentry on the main guard, and sometimes Bonass himself. Let a man waver in his walk or stumble over the awkward step in the dark and his doom was sealed. He was instantly pounced upon, run into the guard-room, and confronted with the sergeant of the guard. "Drunk," said the sergeant; and the man was thrown or hustled into the prisoners' room, and the door banged behind him.

That prisoners' room was not a pleasant place to spend a night in. Imagine a bare room, some fifteen feet square, with a small grated window not larger than a birdcage. Imagine that room with from sixty to seventy prisoners cooped up in the dark, half of them drunk, some of them furious. Imagine the condition of these men, sitting, or standing, or lying on top of each other all night in the hot summer. Imagine all the uncleanness and horror of such a place! In the year 1871 "going wide" had its drawbacks.

There were humours also. Private William Byrne, who suffered from a complication of chronic thirst and kleptomania, was returning to barracks one night from town when he suddenly remembered that he had not spoiled the Egyptians; it was a point of honour with William to steal

something. To atone for his oversight he robbed an orchard, packing the apples into his tunic. Then he tried to break into barracks by scaling the tall iron railings far from the guard-room; and, catching his foot between two spikes, he lost his balance, and had to shout for help. He was found by a patrol hanging head downwards, with the apples rolling out of his tunic and half a cigar doing its best to choke him.

Private Harry Neild, a burly Yorkshireman, and Private Larry Dolan, a little Irishman, were both five days absent. They arrived together on a fine Sunday morning very much the worse for drink—Neild driving up in a carriage from Cowes at the very moment that Larry was wheeled up by the civil police in a wheelbarrow from Newport. They were both dropped into the prisoners' room, where the Yorkshireman sang, "We'll all go a-hunting to-day," while poor Larry wept and demanded a "doc-doc-doctor to prove him shober."

Then there were fights in town, and affrays with the picket, and men got hurt. And Jim Hanley came home in a lady's silk dress and a sailor's hat, and said he was the Princess Alice; and Augustus Cashman, in an incipient state of d.t., arose in the night, and was found praying in the drill-field with a circle of wax vestas stuck all round him in the grass alight; and G. C. F. Smith, of K Company, called Alphabet Smith, who was a recruit from the Minorities, stole a parrot and cage, and was turned out of the Service; and Ryan, the beauty, being in his cups, fought three rounds with the lamppost outside the tailor's shop, and had to be accommodated with the "frog's march" to the "clink;" and Corporal Peebles was reduced to the ranks for knocking up the doctor at one in the morning, and asking the surgeon-major to come and examine his teeth.

In fact, the gallant Ramchunders went very wide indeed. Which reminds me of a story told by an old soldier of my company, named Peter Lynch. It was soon after I joined. Peter had just been told that "Alphabet" Smith had been discharged with ignominy for theft. He was disgusted, and expressed his feelings thus:

"The Service is no good since discipline has been relaxed. In the old days, bedad, any galoot of that kind would be drummed out. I remember a man of my company when I was in the 'dirty half-hundred' (the 50th Foot), was drummed out for burglin' the canteen and calling the senior major an Irish goat. When they used to drum a man out they cut the facin's and the buttons off him, and turned his tunic inside out. And the regiment was formed up at open order, facin' inwards. And the prisoner was marched down the lines to the tune of the 'Rogue's March,' wid the drums and fifes behind

him, until he came to the gate, when the youngest drummer kicked him out.

"Well, this trauneen was marched down the red lane and duly kicked through the gate. And when he was through the gate he was a civilian, d'ye mind? And he turned about as proud as a grand juke, and says he to the colonel, he says: 'Ye may dismiss yer men, colonel,' he says; 'they are the dirtiest lot of blackguards I ever inspected in me life,' says he. And bedad, the colonel was that wild he looked as if he could ate him."

VII.

RECRUITS' DRILL.

It was very cold when we turned out for our first recruits' drill at six o'clock one morning. We had got rid of the wardrobe of Mr. Ikey Mo, and were new men in our scarlet serge jackets, blue serge trousers, glengarry caps, and regulation boots. We were handed over first of all to a corporal, who took us to the gymnasium. Here we put on canvas shoes and belts, and hung up our caps and tunics.

Then a short, red-headed, crabby gymnastic sergeant came and looked us over; after which a corporal formed us into fours and led us in a run of one thousand yards round a field. This over, we went to dumb-bells and parallel bars, and very funny were some of the attempts made by the raw boys who had never seen a gymnasium before.

This over, we re-dressed, and with aching limbs and rather dizzy heads ran back to breakfast.

And then the fun began. We were marched out on to the gravel parade and left to the tender mercies of the drill-instructors. I remembered the saying of the retired sergeant in Bulwer-Lytton's book, "Right, sir. Been in the 42nd. Understand discipline: only be rude to the privates," and I now began to realise the truth of what that old soldier said.

First came a Cockney corporal, a most caustic little beast, who pushed and pulled us into something like a line, finding a fresh insult for each in turn. Then came a hoarse growl from the rear, "Don't dress the scarecrows, Corporal Oliver. I'll damn soon lick the lubbers into shape," and forth stepped one of the quaintest figures my eyes have ever beheld.

Sergeant Hallowell was one of the drill-sergeants transferred from the Guards. He was a tall man, over six feet high, and of a spare and angular figure. His chest was so outrageously

padded that it gave him the appearance of a pouter pigeon. He had high shoulders and long legs. He had a comic face, with a red nose, bushy eyebrows, and a rusty, bristly moustache. His expression, at once fierce and comic, reminded one irresistibly of a jack-in-the-box or Punch.

In the deepest, harshest bass voice that ever spoke, and with his cheek bulged out by a quid of tobacco, this remarkable warrior at once began to address us.

First of all he stalked up very close to the line and glared down at us as though he thought of drawing our teeth. Then he growled in a sepulchral manner: "You miserable devils; you *miserable* devils."

Having paid over this compliment, he walked slowly backwards for some twenty yards, halted, gave his quid a wrench, and roared out: "You—miserable—*devils*."

And we all stood motionless, and with an uncomfortable feeling that we deserved the description thoroughly.

"Now," said the sergeant, putting his shoulders back, and glancing his whimsical eye along the line, "pay attention to me. You are raw recruits; raw and green. I'm here to dress you and drill you, and frizzle you and grill you, and pepper you and salt you till you're done to a turn; and by whiskers I shall *do* it. Don't grin at me, that man with the muffin face. I'll soon sweat the smiles off you. And look to your front, you poor, unsaved sinners, and learn wisdom."

Here the sergeant made a rush at a man near the flank and roared out,

"What's your name?"

"Firwood, sir."

"Don't 'sir' me; call me sergeant. What's your father?"

"A tailor, sergeant."

"A tailor! If he doesn't make better coats than soldiers he ought to be hanged for a botch. Go to centre, Firwood, and grow, and trust God, Firwood, and turn out your toes, you—*miserable*—*dev-il*."

The sergeant stepped backwards again.

"Now," he went on, "when I say 'Eyes front' look straight to your front, or as straight as you can, and forget your past sins and listen to me. I shall make men of you. I shall be your father and your mother and your Uncle Tom from Devizes, and you'll live to bless me in the coming years—if I don't murder you in the process. *Eyes front*."

As the drills went on our Uncle Tom from Devizes taught us to march, and turn, and stand at ease, and wheel, and halt, and mark time; and all these branches of the martial art were made more or less delightful by his mordant humour.

"Now, men, a steady double. Don't run, you rascals,

don't run ; the police ain't after you again. Mark time ! Now, then, Cowley, don't get your knees up to your chin ; you're not on the treadmill *now*."

At one time Mostyn looked down. Hallowell roared out : " Dropped one of your teeth, Mostyn ? Don't glue your eyes to the gravel. You're like some wretch that's committed a murder and wonders where he's hidden the body." And when Mostyn hastily looked up there rang out the withering comment : " And don't look up to heaven, neither, you cannibal ; you'll never go there."

He was a strange character, our Uncle Thomas. He would rush up to the flank of the squad, give the command " Eyes right," pop a fresh quid of tobacco into his mouth, shout " Eyes front," and go on with the drill.

One day he had marked six of the tallest and strongest of the squad for club-drill, which was extra punishment drill, and when he dismissed the squad he ordered these men to " stand fast." Then, the rest of the men being out of earshot, he said to the six defaulters : " Now, look here, you vagabonds, would you rather do an hour at club-drill or go and dig half an hour in my garden ? "

But rude as he was and gruff as he was, his bark was worse than his bite, and he seldom put a man in the guard-room. He could take a joke, too, for one day, when he had kept us long past our time at drill, we tried him. He had us charging in line with fixed bayonets, and as he had backed nearly to the railings at the end of the parade he gave the word " Mark time " ; but we pretended not to hear, and charged on until we had him with his back to the railings and the bayonets at his chest. There he stood swearing while we marked time. We dare not have done that with any other drill-instructor. Hallowell threatened to make prisoners of the whole squad, but he dismissed us and went away grinning.

Years afterwards some of us who had got promotion told him in the sergeants' mess that he had bullied us shamefully when we were recruits ; but he was ready for us.

" Yes," he said ; " and where are you now ? In the sergeants' mess with stripes on your arms. And you owe it all to me. I made soldiers of you. I was a father to you. And now there's not one of you with enough decent gratitude to ask a poor old drill-instructor if he's got a mouth on him."

They kept us as recruits pretty busy. We were at drill, or school, or gymnasium from six in the morning to six in the evening, if we had the luck not to be at club-drill from six to seven. And then we were at liberty to clean our arms and accoutrements or scrub tables.

But we were young, and the air was good. And the

gymnastics, the drilling, and the regular hours and plain food began to tell. In a few weeks we were straight and smart, and stood and moved lightly. In the bronzed, alert, upright young soldiers no one could have recognised the mob of assorted ragamuffins who had tramped in the dust from Cowes. And as our appearance improved, and as we got to know our work, and did it more smartly, so our instructors modified their language. We were no longer rascals or cannibals. We were men. It was "Steady, men," or "Be alive, men," or "Order arms more smartly, men. Oh, my Lord, look at that old man climbing up his rifle!"

Indeed, we began to be rather proud of ourselves, and imagine we were soldiers. But we had yet to go through another mill. And the miller was the terrible sergeant-major.

VIII.

THE PERPENDICULAR RECRUIT.

The routine of our new life varied little from day to day. It began with a rather dismal bugle call at about 5.45. This call was "the rouse," but it was known to us as "the donkey." It was the "quarter" for Réveillé. The rouse was to wake us, the Réveillé meant turn out. But we turned out before Réveillé, for the 79th Highlanders lay in the same barracks, and between our two calls it was the jovial custom to march a brace of pipers up and down the lines and charm our ears with "Hey, Johnny Cope." I am one of the few southrons who like the bagpipes. My English and Irish comrades used to get up to swear.

After "Johnny Cope" came the Réveillé. First of all, the buglers, massed on the square, sounded the call. Then the drums beat "the points of war." Then the drums and fifes played a kind of reel, called "Old Mother Grey-Goose." Then our corporal began to shout, and we carried our beds and bedding outside, laid them on the ground, and ran to the wash-house.

At half-past six we were dressed and marching to the gymnasium.

Breakfast was at a quarter to eight. It consisted of a pound of dry bread and a pint of coffee. The coffee came from the cookhouse in large cans, and was served in white delf basins on deal tables innocent of tablecloths.

Dinner was at one o'clock. It consisted of beef or mutton and potatoes. There was not too much dinner. But I

found then that to leave the table feeling unsatisfied means being free for work and free from drowsiness. And thus I learned a good habit, which I have never lost, the habit of eating sparingly. I believe I have been able to keep well through long years of sedentary life chiefly because I have always been a small eater. I am convinced that most men eat too much, and that a good many of our ills are due to overfeeding.

Tea—— Well, we had a pint of slop in a basin and half a pound of dry bread.

Supper could be had if one went to the canteen and paid for it.

On the whole, rather a meagre diet for growing lads who spent the whole day working in the open air. But I am bound to acknowledge that we throve on it, and that we looked well, felt well, and were well.

Our chief pleasure of an evening was to listen to the band playing for the officers at mess. The Ramchunders had a good band and an excellent bandmaster, and it was jolly in the summer evenings to sit outside the huts and listen to the music.

It was while listening to the band one fine moonlight night that I first made the acquaintance of Johnson, "the perpendicular recruit." Johnson was lean and tall and rigidly upright; hence the nickname. It was rumoured that he had once served in the Mexican cavalry, and that he had been an officer. He was a very gentlemanly fellow, and eccentric enough to be noticeable even among so many eccentric characters.

"I have noticed you before," said Johnson, "listening to the band. You are fond of music."

I said I was very fond of music.

"I notice, also," said Johnson, "that you look at the moon."

"Don't you?" I asked.

"Of course I do," he answered; "but hardly anybody else does. Don't you remark that, Blatchford? If you hung up a halfpenny Chinese lantern on a pole the whole regiment would stand and stare at it. But never a man looks up at the moon. Damme, they don't know it's there!"

"I believe you are right," I said.

"I am right. A few nights ago I was looking out of window at the moon, when one of the men asked me what I was staring at. When I told him, he thought I was mad. If, my dear chap, I had been looking at the disgusting pictures in a French journal, the whole barrack-room would have crowded round and been ready to fight for the paper."

"Yes, yes!" I said.

"Poor fools," said Johnson, "they imagine they are sane."

"Do you ever talk to them like this?" I asked.

Johnson shook his head. "No," he said; "if you talked sense or culture to these animals it would end in a fight. They have no soul for anything but beer. By the way, talking of beer, come and have a liquor."

When Johnson asked a man to "Come and have a liquor" he was transfigured. I have never seen another person put such a poetry of expression into so trite a speech. He stood very upright, closed his heels, raised his right hand gracefully, as if to suggest the quaffing of nectar from a golden chalice, and smiled the smile beautiful.

But I was a strict abstainer, and I told him so. He dropped his eloquent hand, shook his head sadly, and said: "That, if you will pardon my saying so, is a mistake, Blatchford."

"You think so?" said I.

"Yes," he said, smoothing his long, silky moustache, "it is a mistake, amigo. Take the good the gods bestow. The moon, the music, and the beer. Woman is good, and wine is good; but the combination! Ah, Blatchford, come and have a liquor!"

I declined gently, but firmly, at which he sighed, and, sitting down upon a form, began to roll himself a cigarette.

"Have you ever had a romance?" he asked me.

"I don't know," I said, feeling shy. "Don't you call this a romance?"

Johnson jumped up and laid his hand upon my shoulder.

"A true remark, Blatchford," he said, "a devilish true remark! Everything in life is a romance. The music and the moonlight and the beefy troopers are romances. They are, by Heaven! The goose-step is a romance, in a way. *Won't* you come and have a liquor?"

I shook my head.

"You have been abroad, Johnson," I suggested.

"Don't," said Johnson. "The word has no meaning. Was I more abroad in Texas or in China than I am here in Parkhurst Barracks? Are you abroad now? Or do you feel at home, comrade?"

I admitted that the whole life seemed strange and foreign to me.

"Ah, so it is, so it is," said he. "I am a stranger here; heaven is my home. Eh? That's the idea, Blatchford. And I would to Heaven I could convince you, my dear fellow, of the merits of the course I just now invited you to pursue. Are you *quite* sure, Blatchford, that you will not come and have a liquor?"

I was quite sure, and at that we left it. But who would expect in the British Army to meet such a man as the perpendicular recruit? The fact is, one need never be surprised by any character one meets in that rendezvous of the unusual.

IX.

SATURDAY HALF-HOLIDAY.

Among the recruits who joined with me was a good-humoured, witty London youth named Willie Bamford. One evening, as I came away from the reading-room, I met Bamford, who smiled his own whimsical smile, and said:

"Well, 'Silence,' thank Gord it's Friday!"

I asked why one should return thanks for Friday.

"Why?" said Bamford; "Because to-morrow we shall have the Saturday half-holiday."

I said that would be welcome.

"Yes," said Bamford; "no drill; nothing to do; only barrack cleaning at Réveillé; doctor's inspection at nine; kit inspection at eleven; and coal carrying from two till five. After that you can clean yourself up and go and have a rampage with the girls. It's a fine thing being a soldier; but if I 'list again, I'll 'list for an officer."

The "holiday" commenced at six in the morning. The beds were carried out, tubs of water were carried in, and barrack cleaning began. Floors, shelves, tables, and forms were scrubbed with soap and sand. Walls were swept, and whitewashed some six feet up. Fenders, pokers, trestles, legs of forms, and legs of cots were blackleaded, and tin dishes and cans were polished till they shone again. This lasted till breakfast-time.

After breakfast a rush was made to the lavatory to wash for doctor's inspection. Doctor's inspection was held in No. 1 Room, the men standing in single rank round the room, with shirt necks turned back to show the breast, legs bare to the knee, and sleeves rolled up to the shoulder. The doctor then walked round, looking closely at each man, after which the company was dismissed.

But we had to wait quite an hour before the doctor came, and it struck me as droll that we should stand about in our bare feet on the wet floors waiting for the doctor to see that we were quite well.

Kit inspection began about eleven, and was very wearisome. Every soldier had to lay out his kit according to a strict rule, and the cots and shelves as well as the kits must be in apple-

pie order. Then the officers would come round and look at the kits.

And I must say that I have never yet seen an officer who did not look more or less of a fool while performing this duty. Kits should be seen once a month, in a sensible way, by the sergeants. Perhaps they are now.

To see a field officer squinting along a line of beds to make sure they are dressed in line, or to hear him administering a stern rebuke to some big soldier because his socks are not neatly folded, does not conduce to a proper feeling of dignity and respect.

"Ha!" said a big, burly major one day to Paddy Macnamara, "very nice; very nice indeed. Now, can you assure me, on your honour as a soldier, that all the articles in your kit have buttons on?"

"No, sir," said Pat.

"Ha! That's unfortunate. And which article is without buttons?" asked the major.

"Well, sir," said Pat, "there's no buttons on the socks and towels, sir."

The major glared, swallowed, curled his fierce moustache, and said: "Quite right. Ha! My mistake," and moved on; but the colour-sergeant gave Macnamara a look which would have lighted a candle.

At the time of which I write, inspection—frequent, irritating, needless inspection—was one of the soldier's bugbears. All such duties should be left to the non-commissioned officers. When I was a sergeant I could always keep my room and my men in order, and without offence or trouble. The surest guarantee of discipline and smartness in a regiment is the example of the sergeants.

Some officers, I am glad to say not many, were what the men called "fool-rogues"—petty, stupid, spiteful martinets. I have seen a captain take off his white kid glove, ram it down the barrel of a Snider rifle, and give a man three days' C.B. (confined to barracks) if there was a mark on the kid.

I have seen the same intelligent officer rub his kid glove on a barrack-room shelf and give a whole room kit inspection in marching order if he found a mark of dust. Dust in a room where men are almost continually cleaning and polishing belts, buckles, and boots!

If such officers could hear the criticisms and comments of the soldiers whom they treat with such disdain, I fancy their vanity would wince.

And yet on one occasion, a major, the hero of the unbuttoned towels, did hear the truth. But he was not spiteful; he was only foolish, and the men did not dislike him.

He was a human old soldier, and one of his habits was to sit in his shirtsleeves in his private sanctum colouring short clay pipes and reading the cheapest shilling shockers. One day while so engaged he asked his servant, an old "buff-stick," with whom the major sometimes talked very freely, what the men thought of him.

Birchington, the servant, said he did not know.

"Nonsense," said the major; "you know. Tell me what the men really say about me."

"I—I don't like to, sir," said Birchington.

"Look here," said the major; "I want to know. I insist upon knowing. Take this shilling and get yourself a drink. Now, what do the men call me behind my back?"

Birchington pocketed the shilling, stood to attention, and said:

"Very well, sir. They call you a d——d old woman, sir."

"Hah!" said the major; "I'm hanged if I didn't think so!"

But I have digressed. We began our coal carrying at two o'clock, and went on till five or six. It was hard work. The coal was carried in boxes, each of which held 80lb. The boxes had iron handles, which hurt the fingers. It is no joke to carry such boxes up two or three flights of stairs, and coal-dust is not good for scarlet tunics and pipeclayed collars.

As I was returning from my last trip I came across Bamford, who was sitting on an upturned box gazing seriously at a bill headed: "Advantages of the Army."

"What are you looking at, Willie?" I asked.

"I was looking among the advantages of the Army for coal carrying," said Bamford. "It isn't in the bill. How is it they don't put up any bills about the disadvantages of the Army? Tell you what it is, 'Silence,' I'm going in for promotion. I don't like being a private. Lor' lumme, chummy, I wonder what day they sweeps chimmlies?"

This finished the "Saturday half-holiday," and we went and had a cold bath and some cold tea.

X.

SERGEANT-MAJOR "LIGHTNING."

We called the sergeant-major "Lightning." It was a good name—when you knew the man. Sergeant-Major James Sheldon was uneducated, unscrupulous, and wicked; but he was a clever man, a remarkable man, and the best drill-sergeant I have ever known.

He could drill the head off any other sergeant in the regiment. He knew more about drill than all the officers and sergeants in the regiment. He could handle a battalion as a master-at-arms could handle a foil. He could "hold" the men as no one else could. He seemed to convert a battalion of ten companies into an organic creature. The men moved to his word of command as dancers move to music. You understood what he meant even when the tramping of the feet on the gravel drowned the actual words. He varied the sound and the pace of his commands, and always gave the "moving word" on the proper foot. He could see eight hundred men at one glance, and knew every man by sight.

And he had a voice—ah, what a voice!

A man could stand half a mile away upon the Newport road and hear "Lightning" drilling the battalion, and know what they were doing. His voice had the penetrative, singing quality of a Scottish fisher-girl's. It was flexible, piercing, full of changes. It roared, it throbbed, it screamed, it droned, it barked, it hissed; it had sharp, whistling notes, like the cut of a whip; and it never wavered, never broke, and never tired! I have never heard anything quite like it.

How long we "ringtails," as the old soldiers called us recruits, remained in the hands of the drill-sergeants I cannot now remember. I should say about two months; two months of hard work, in sunny weather. At last we became proficient in hand and foot drill, and in manual and firing exercises; and the order was given for the sergeant-major to take us over.

There must have been three hundred of us, all young men between sixteen and twenty-two; and when we were formed up in column we made six respectable companies.

One bright morning they marched us out on to the great parade, and formed us up in quarter-column, and stood us at ease. And then—enter "Lightning."

We had never been in "Lightning's" hands before, and we were all eager, and most of us rather nervous.

The great man strode on to the parade with his little stick under his arm, and walked along the front of the first company, glancing sharply at the lads as he passed.

Then he strode away, until he was quite fifty yards from us, and before we knew what had happened he had got us.

One word, sounding like a pistol-shot, brought us to attention, four more, three of them short, and the last like the blast of a trumpet, and we were on the march. Every man gripped his rifle, squared his shoulders, shut his teeth, and opened his eyes and ears, for every man knew "Lightning" well enough to know that not the fraction of a second's inattention

would be possible. We went at our work like a rowing eight in a boat-race. And "Lightning" extended himself, and made us use every ounce we had in us.

"Look to your front, men, and don't—hurry—the time. Lef'—right, lef'—right. By the *left*. Steady, steady, steady. By—the—*left*. Don't wag your heads like a team of horses on May morning! Private Oates, of A Company, get the step. Now mind this deploying on the march! There's a man in the rear rank of No. 3 Company with his eyes glued to the gravel. Look *up*, man: you've dropped no money there. You spent your pay last night in the canteen. Mar'—*dime*: you're dancing like a troupe of ballet girls in a pantomime. *March*, men: march, for the love of Heaven! *Fowers*—*ight*! by the *left*. Oh, march, men! Will you march, God bless you! You can't deploy until you can march. That's better. Keep the time. *For*—ward: by the *left*. Oh, close up, men; close up—this isn't the Lord Mayor's Show! Trail your arms, Private Benson: you remind me of my old grandam trundling a mop. Front—*turrna*! Smartly, smartly! Look at me, how smart I am—and old enough to be your father! Wake up, there, you lubbers in No. 2: do you think you're going to a harvest home? No idleness, men. I will—not—have idleness! Now, mind this wheeling in quarter-column. Column will wheel to the left—lef' *wheel*. Very good, men; very good: come *round* there, No. 4: column will continue the wheel—lef' *wheel*. Good, men; good. I can drill you! By God, *I* can drill you! And I will drill you! I can drill you on a dessert-plate. Damme, I can drill you on a threepenny-bit!"

For an hour the sergeant-major manœuvred us about the square in the blazing sun, and all the time he boasted and swore, and taunted us. Then we halted and stood at ease. We thought we deserved a rest, and had done well; also, we hoped we should be dismissed. But "Lightning" was only just beginning. He had been merely feeling our mouths, so to speak. Now, as we stood to get our breath, he made the following short speech:

"Stand easy. Listen to what I say. I am the sergeant-major. I am *the* sergeant-major. Make no mistake about it. I'll have no d—d nonsense! I am here to drill you, and you shall be drilled. I'll have the best you've got. I'll have *all* you've got. You shall soldier. Now, I'm going to handle you at the double. You can do it. You *can* do it. I will make you do it if I stop here all night. Men, I will have it. Men, there is one God, one devil, and one sergeant-major; and I'm the *man*!"

The next instant we were at the slope, and at the double;

and the sergeant-major was rapping out a series of staccato commands as though we had been a many-keyed instrument on which he was playing a tune.

It was "ri'-turn, ri'-turn, ri'-turn; lef'-turn, ri'-turn, lef'-turn, right-about-turn, lef'-turn, ri'-turn, ri'-turn," as fast as the turns could be made, until we grew dizzy and worried, and forgot the directing flank, when "Lightning" would screech: "Ferunt—*turrn*." And we all faced different ways, and found ourselves a mere struggling mob.

This was what the "major" had played for. Instantly came the command, *mar'-dime*," and then the rebuke, "There's only one front, men, and you can't remember it. I've bought better soldiers at a fish-shop at two for three halfpence, many a time. Forward, by the *left*." And then the game began again. It was hot work under the August sun, and "Lightning" was as good as his word: he "had all we'd got."

But such masterly handling, twice a day, for a week or more, made a marvellous difference. And after the "major" had marched us, and wheeled us, and formed us, and charged us; and after he had worked us through the bayonet exercise until we all moved "like one man," he paraded us proudly before the adjutant; and we were declared perfect, and were handed over to the sergeant-instructor in musketry to be taught to shoot.

XI.

BULLET AND BILLET.

The musketry of 1871 and the musketry of to-day are very different. But the chief fault of the old system was that it did not go far enough. As far as it went it was fairly good.

To be a good shot a man must have command of his rifle. The position drill and aiming drill of our day served its purpose, it gave a man command of his rifle, and it established the necessary unity between the hand and the eye.

It was, in fact, a form of elementary education. It was only elementary, but it laid a foundation.

I was in the Army for seven years, and during the latter half of the time I did a good deal of rifle shooting, and helped to train many young marksmen.

The great fault of the Army system of training in musketry was insufficient practice. The men did not get enough shooting. A good shot cannot be made of a man who only fires sixty shots a year, and those without proper teaching.

In those days there were no Morris tubes, no air rifles.

A soldier fired once a year ten shots standing at 200 yards, ten kneeling at 300 yards, ten each at 500, 600, 700, and 800 yards in the prone position.

He was never taught even so simple a thing as the value of the windage on his sights. He never fired a single shot at a moving mark. He only fired ten shots at unknown distances.

He was regarded as an unintelligent automaton, whose fire was to be "controlled" and "directed" by officers who knew as little about shooting as he did, or less.

He was armed with weapons imperfectly constructed and wrongly sighted, and was supplied with ammunition of variable quality.

In 1875-6 we had in use three different patterns of Martini rifles. Not one of those patterns were correctly sighted; not one of them was right by fifty yards in the elevation. The rifle I used was an Enfield pattern. It was fifty yards under-sighted, and it carried left. At 200 yards it carried quite six inches left. At 600 yards it carried three feet to the left. All the Enfields carried left. When I fired at 200 yards I had to aim six inches right of the bull's-eye. At long ranges I had to make a complex calculation of windage.

Thus, if a man armed with a Martini was using at 500 yards four feet of right windage, I had to use four feet of right windage less three feet: that is, one foot of right windage. But I had to find this out for myself. For more than a year I fired in class-firing, in contests at prize meetings, without knowing that my rifle was wrong; I thought the deflection was due to some peculiarity of my own in "pull off."

None of the fine points of shooting were taught to the men. I do not believe that outside the rifle team of eight men there was a single officer or soldier in our regiment who knew how to mark a sliding-bar to give a required deflection. Not a man of them could have marked a bar to give, say, 15in., 27in., or 36in. of right or left deflection. Not a man knew how much on the back sight meant an additional elevation of one foot on the target. Not a man of them could have told the speed of a running man or a galloping horse.

Most of the men pulled their triggers instead of pressing them. Very few understood the importance of keeping the rifle quite still while aiming and firing. As one of our sergeants said: "The men cannot shoot; they can only fire a gun."

Nine men out of ten can be taught to shoot well. I believe it is possible to make any normal man into a good shot in two or three months. But it could not be done in three years on the lines followed in my time; and it cannot be done at all without ammunition.

The British taxpayer, who lives at home at ease, and gets

his hand deep down in return for the privilege, has no idea of the stupidity of most British generals and admirals. Good shooting is the most important part of the art of war. But in my day very few officers thought so ; and to-day very few have thoroughly realised that important fact. This is because our officers are steeped in routine, and seldom venture to use their brains.

Only a few years ago a few sensible and determined naval officers had to make a great fight to get our naval gunners properly trained. It seems incredible, but it is true, that ten years ago the anti-shooting faction in the British Navy was stronger than the shooting faction.

About a year before the Boer War an officer of very high rank and distinguished service in the Army declared that the volley firing must be regarded as the normal thing in action, and independent firing as the exception. I protested in the Press, but, of course, without effect.

Two or three years later I was riding with some Volunteers who were going to Bisley, and the talk turned on the Boer War. "Well," said one Volunteer, "the Boer War has done one good thing : it has killed volley firing."

Now, how did it happen that an obscure ex-sergeant of the Line and a private of Volunteers were right where a distinguished fighting general was wrong ? The answer is simple enough. The two nobodies were practical marksmen ; the general was not.

So here we come to a grave defect in our military system : our officers are not practical marksmen. Well, I suggest that no officer should be granted a commission until he knows something about rifles and rifle shooting. On a field of battle one good shot is worth twenty bad ones. But until recently—I cannot speak of the actual present—our Army knew hardly anything about rifle shooting.

Let me give an example. During the Boer War of 1881 a British force with a few guns were opposed by some 700 Boers. The distance was 700 yards. The guns had no cover. The Boers fired from ambush. After the action, two of the guns were found to be splashed all over with Boer bullet-marks.

This was regarded as an example of wonderful marksmanship. It was talked about in the Press and in the Army. Now I dare say that the eight men of our rifle team, or the eight men of any rifle team of any regiment of Regulars or Volunteers firing at a gun from cover at 700 yards would put that gun out of action in less than half an hour.

But two hundred bad shots might blaze away for half a day and hardly once hit man or gun.

I saw Lieut. Hickley, of the 103rd Fusiliers, score eleven

bull's-eyes at 600 yards with a Martini. I have known three sergeants of our regiment in a strong breeze, hit a three-foot diameter bull twenty-seven times out of thirty shots with the Martini at 800 yards. I have seen a sergeant of the 9th Foot, with a Snider rifle, break dinner-plates tossed into the air at 100 yards distance. And I have known a man to fire twenty shots at 200 and 300 yards, and never once touch a target six feet by four.

Good shooting wins battles. Men cannot be taught to shoot by officers who do not understand shooting. Men cannot learn to shoot without ammunition. Ammunition cannot be got without money.

Here is a simple proposition which I used to put before the recruits when I was teaching musketry. Needless to say, it was not in the drill-book.

In a five-hours' battle between two armies of ten thousand men, it is not often that 4,000 men are hit by rifle bullets.

If every man made one hit out of all the rounds he fires nobody would be left alive on either side.

The man who hits one enemy in a whole campaign has done his share.

If every man on his side did as much not a single enemy would be left on the field.

Therefore, my boys, do not waste a cartridge.

But I am talking as an instructor instead of telling how I was myself instructed. Let us begin another chapter.

XII.

THE YOUNG IDEA.

Sergeant-Instructor Shanks was a keen, dry, clever old sergeant, and a very good fellow. When we had gone through all our long recruits' course of position drill, aiming drill, judging distance, blank firing, and the rest, and were to begin to fire ball, he formed us up and made a little speech.

It is thirty-eight years since the speech was made; but I think I can remember it. He said: "Now, men. You are going to learn to shoot. The gun is put into your hands to shoot with, and if you cannot use it you are devilish little use to your country. It is a horrible thing that men should shoot each other. It is a pity there is such a thing as war. But war there is, and will be. And what I say to you is—since you must shoot—shoot straight!"

It was early morning when we marched away through Parkhurst Forest for the rifle range. I can remember that

march so well! I can smell the odour of the pines; see the tall bracken, the bronze trunks, the sombre foliage through which at times we caught a glint of sunny sea. And we were all young, and fresh, and hopeful, and as we marched we sang. And so we came to the targets.

I was rather anxious, but quite calm. I looked at the glaring white target, and thanked God for a big bull's-eye; and I waited for my turn. We fired shot by shot, each man in his turn stepping out, loading, firing, and then stepping back.

When my turn came Shanks said to me, "Aim at the left bottom corner of the bull, raise the muzzle steadily, and press the trigger as you rise."

I obeyed implicitly. Then I felt a bang in the shoulder, and a sharp tap on the cheek-bone, and saw a flash, and smelt the powder. Oh, that acrid, keen powder scent: I love it to this day!

"Bull, in the middle," said the quiet voice of Shanks; and I shouldered my arms and fell back.

Ah! that was a great day, and I was very happy; but not so happy that I could not sympathise with some of the unlucky ones.

Of every average hundred men there are two who cannot shoot: and cannot be taught to shoot. We had two in our small squad. These men managed, even at the short range, to miss the whole of the big target. When one of them had missed his ninth shot, Shanks said to him: "Where did you aim that time?"

"I aimed left, sergeant," said the poor boy.

"Ah!" said Shanks, "then aim—aim somewhere else."

"Where shall I aim, sergeant?" the boy asked.

Shanks answered quite gravely:

"Aim to miss the target, and you may hit it!"

But Shanks was merciful in his irony in comparison with his old friend, Drill-Sergeant Hallowell.

"Where, in Heaven's name, did you learn to shoot like that?" he asked a recruit named Godfrey.

"Learned in the Militia, sergeant."

"I thought you'd learned in a public-house," said Hallowell. "You pull a trigger as if you were drawing a cork."

Bang! went poor Godfrey's rifle, and a great puff of chalk flew out of the bank six feet right of the target.

"By the Union Jack!" said Hallowell, "if this chap aimed at the rear-guard he'd kill the drum-major. Man, you have a swivel eye; it's always looking round the corner for pay day."

But there was one recruit who had an unfortunate name:

George Dedman. George missed nearly every shot, and Hallowell made great play with him.

"Shooting's not your game, Dedman," said the sergeant. "Your line's grinning through a horse-collar. Go to the rear, Dedman: you'll be a dead man before you're a dead shot. There's Firewood's grandfather, who was hanged for horse-stealing in 1805 (was that the date, Firewood?), would do more execution than you if they gave the old rascal a pinch of snuff and told him to aim low!"

Young Sandy M'Dougal caused amusement. He began with a bull's-eye.

As he returned swaggering to the right flank Johnny Sullivan asked him:

"What did ye get, Sandy?"

"A bull's-ee, Jack," said Sandy, with a wide grin.

Sandy's turn came again, and once more he hit the bull.

"What did ye get that time?" Sullivan asked.

"A bull's-ee, Jack."

But the third time Sandy failed, and some of the men smiled audibly at his glare of incredulity when his bullet ploughed up the clay in front of the target.

Sullivan, looking demurely unconscious, asked again:

"What did ye get, Sandy?"

"Oh, ye chatterin' fool," said Sandy, "go and throw things at yersel'."

"There is," said Shanks drily, "considerable human nature in M'Dougal, although a Scotchman."

When we had each fired ten rounds we fell in and marched home again.

Back through the bracken and the pines we marched, singing a jolly chorus. But some of our party were silent and unhappy. And I thought then, as I have thought often since, when I have taken part in rifle contests, that a good many good fellows have to lose so that one may be proud of his victory. Poor Godfrey, poor Dedman; they were hopeless shots! The gods had dealt unkindly with them.

Now, I have always had a soft place in my heart for those men who cannot shoot, nor learn to shoot; and on one occasion I took a very big and foolish risk to help one of that unlucky kind. But that, as Kipling says, is another story.

When we had finished our ball firing and our judging distance, we were turned out to drill before the commanding officer, and we did our work so well that we were cheered by the old soldiers as we marched off parade, and were honourably and officially "dismissed to duty."

So we were soldiers now, and not recruits. But yet I must go back for a little to explain how promotion came within the range of possibility, and to relate the bearing of our instructors under those peculiar circumstances.

XIII.

A PROBLEM.

One evening a report got about in barracks that the drill-sergeant had been asked to select recruits for promotion.

The idea that recruits not yet dismissed drill should be made lance-corporals filled the old soldiers with scorn, and the recruits with astonishment. However, the report was true.

The next morning Sergeant Hallowell formed his squad up in line, and marched them to within a few yards of a brick wall.

"Now, you young rascals," he said, "I have received orders to select one or two of you for the lance stripe. God knows why any of you should have the stripe, and God knows how long any of you'll keep it. But that's not my business. What are you grinning at, Worples, you mother's tragedy? Parade for club-drill at six. I'll teach you to be merry, you poodle-faced son of sin! Walters, draw your feet back, man, your toes are sticking out beyond your front rank man! Stand up, child, stand up! Lean the whole weight of the body on the forepart of the breakfast bread. Now, you glorified gutter-snipes, attend to me. Didn't I tell you I'd be a father to you? Very well. Now, I'm going to select some of you for corporals. Look to your front. Private Braningan, quick march. Halt!"

Braningan marched out, and was halted about a foot from the blank brick wall. Hallowell went up to him, and said: "Corporal Braningan, what state is that wall in?"

"I don't know, sergeant."

"Private Braningan, right-about-turn! Quick march! Halt! Front! What use would a butter-brained batter-pudding of a soldier like you be with a stripe on his arm? Did you ever hear of a corporal who didn't know? The Lord have mercy on your soul!"

"Private Bayliss, quick march! Halt! What state is that wall in?"

Bayliss was silent.

"Sblood!" cried Hallowell. "Is that wall drunk or sober?"

"Sober, sergeant."

"*Right-about-turn!* Quick march! Halt! Front! If anybody asks you whose squad you were trained in, tell a lie. D'ye hear? If you say Sergeant Hallowell dry-nursed you, I'll cut your throat. God bless the King and the Duke of Argyll, have I got a squad of idiots?"

"Private Wilson, quick march! Halt! What state is that wall in?"

"Drunk, sergeant."

"Lance-Corporal Wilson, right-about turn! Quick march! Halt! Front! Is your mother living?"

"Yes, sergeant."

"I'm glad to hear it. I hope she's proud of you. I shall send in your name for the stripe. All the rest of the squad are fools. Squad, stand at ease!"

This was Hallowell's humour. A few days later, as I was walking down the lines, I met the sergeant of my squad, for I had left Hallowell. This sergeant was a little, sneering, currish fellow called Gilles. He stopped me, and asked me if I should like to be a lance-corporal. I said, for I felt very bashful, that I thought I was too young a soldier.

"Oh," said the sergeant, "you'll soon learn! No use missing a chance. What do you say?" I said I thanked him, and would do as he pleased. He said: "All right. I have to select one or two for the stripe, and I'll remember you." I thanked him again, and we parted.

I felt considerably nervous at the idea of being promoted before I had three months' service, but I was rather elated, too.

In a few days I heard that several names had gone in, but I heard nothing about my own.

But what surprised me still more was the bearing of Sergeant Gilles. On parade he continually watched me, found fault with me, swore at me, and tried to confuse me at drill. This went on for some days, and at last he marked me down for club drill; the only time I ever was marked down.

Nor was that all. He came on parade while the club drill was going on, and took charge himself, and he kept us swinging the clubs round and round, and doubling up and down the parade until some of the men could hardly hold their clubs. I know my arms ached, and Gilles stuck to me all the time. "Hold up them clubs! Hold 'em up! I'll take the starch out of yer!" he yelled.

However, the hour passed, and I was free. But I was quite bewildered. Why had this sergeant offered me a stripe? Why had he now turned against me? What had I done to

him? Puzzling over these questions, I met Bamford. Bamford's name had been sent in for promotion. Bamford was a sharp fellow, and a nice fellow. I told Bamford all about my situation.

"So you don't understand that, 'Silence'?" he asked.

"No," I said.

"Well," said Bamford, "then I don't understand you."

I asked him to explain.

"Why," he said, "you're a scholar, aren't you?"

"Not at all."

"No? We all thought you were. You're—well, you're not like some of 'em. And yet you don't understand a man like Gilles."

I said I did not understand at all.

"Oh, innocent!" said Bamford. "When he offered you the stripe, did you ask him to have a drink?"

"No," I said.

Bamford shook his head and smiled.

"There you are," said he. "If you'd stood him half a gallon of canteen slush, your name would have gone in for the stripe, and you wouldn't have got club-drill. Do you tumble?"

I declared that I "tumbled," and thanked him heartily.

That night I pondered deeply over the, to me, amazing mysteries of human nature.

The next day Gilles resumed his abuse, and even went so far as to threaten that he would drive me out of the Service or into prison. But that night the sergeant-major took a hand in the game. Gilles went on Tattoo parade. The major asked him if he had been drinking. Sergeant Quex and Sergeant Bonass were asked to see him, and he was placed under arrest.

In another week he was a private soldier. A year later I was marching a picket through Aldershot, and found Gilles lying drunk on a doorstep. I woke him up, and, finding he could walk well enough, I sent him off to barracks, and he got in safely.

The last time I saw him he was a colour-sergeant. That was after I had left the Army.

XIV.

NO. 3 MESS.

We had twelve men and a corporal in No. 3 Mess of F Company, and a weird baker's dozen of human documents we were. First of all there was Matty Mains, the corporal in charge. Matty was a kindly, easy-going fellow, a beautiful penman, and good accountant. His ruling passion was beer.

Then we had four recruits. There was George Dedman, a simple Hampshire peasant, who was ugly, illiterate, and innocent, and for whom I used to write love-letters to a girl named Minnie. I met Minnie later, and found her very pretty, and dainty and treacherous and vain. Another recruit was a stout and swarthy Londoner named Burridge, who sang music-hall songs and was always hungry, as most of us youngsters were. Burridge was very good-humoured, and full of boyish mischief. The fourth recruit was a smart, good-looking young Londoner named Wilsher, who was one of the first to get the corporal's stripes, and one of the first to lose them. He was a simple, well-meaning lad, and had nice eyes.

Of the older hands, the most noteworthy were Augustus Cashman, known as Mad Gustus; Charles Pride, alias Pompey the Pirate; Larry Dolan, alias Trunkey (so called from his large and peculiar nose); Old Tim Doyle (who was not more than twenty-eight); William Ryan, alias Ryan the Beauty; Pat Nevins, and Johnny Peters.

Johnny Peters was a short, square, powerful Irish navvy; Nevins was a tall Irishman, with a jolly face and a mild blue eye. This man used to write notes for the negotiation of loans as: "Dere Comradd will ye lend me the loan of the price of a pot till the end of the munnth for the love of God, me been on a penny a day, and I will pay ye back plaze God Pat Nevins." He always promised to pay "please God"; but it never pleased God within my experience.

Peters and Nevins were clean, smart soldiers. Their ruling passion was beer.

Tim Doyle was a burly Irishman, with a heavy, good-humoured face, a chin like the toe of a boot, and a slow, wise smile. He was an excellent chap, and his ruling passion was politics.

Larry Dolan was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. He was one of the most comic soldiers I ever met, and that is saying much. He was short, and lean, with large feet and hands; and his small, dim eyes, his small, thin mouth, and

his enormous and flexible nose gave him a strange look of wistful doubt and surprise. He was Tim Doyle's cot-mate and friend, and he loved beer as much as Tim loved politics.

Hour after hour Trunkey Dolan and Tim would sit side by side and "chew the rag." I think of them now, after thirty-eight years, with gratitude and joy. I laugh all over myself when I recall their names. They were *lovely*.

"Look at here, Larry, avic," old Tim would say, in his deep bass growl, "'tis no use talkin' to the amadhauns in this pultan, but be the seven shores iv Cork, bedad, the Rooshians an' the Prooshians 'll be the full o' ther eye. D'ye moind me, Larry. Wid the French all bruises an' stickin' plaister, an' the divil a British fleet in the Adriathic, the good Lord Himself only knows what thim Rooshians and Prooshians do be afther!"

"An' phwat the divil *do* they be afther, Tim?" Larry would inquire; and then the basso hum would begin again about the Rooshians and Prooshians.

But no one ever got the glimmer of an idea what the black intrigues and diabolic alliances of the Rooshians and the Prooshians might portend, for when we pressed Tim he scowled darkly, and muttered and stammered that the Rooshians and the Prooshians were at the back of something not named, or at the bottom of something still in embryo, and would ultimately be the full of the eye of some person or persons whose identity was mysteriously veiled by the pronoun "they."

When Larry was, so to speak, "fed up" with the two stealthy and terrible allies, he would break suddenly into the conversation with one of his amazing stories. When Larry told a story, he "conducted" it, as one might say, with his wonderful nose, which he could at will cause to travel about his face in a manner at once alarming and delightful. To see his small mouth curl itself into a peerless Irish grin, while his nose twisted itself nearly under his right ear, and to hear the sound, between a sniff and a whistle, with which this action was "pointed," was to lose oneself in admiration.

"Och! The Prooshians, the curse iv Cromwell on thim, they're as deep as a bog-hole, and as tricherous, Tim. Bad end to 'em! Last night, as I was comin' along the Cowes Road, who the divil should I meet but Andy White, of H Company; be the token I had not a trauneen in me kick, an' me wid the thirst o' the ages upon me; and says he: 'Larry Doolan, be jabers,' says he, 'an' me lookin' for a pal,' says he. 'What for?' says I. An' och, Tim, me jool!" Here Larry's nose curled under his ear, and one eye closed and

the other squinted. "An', och, Tim, me jool, if ye'll belive me, he was afther findin' a sailor!"

At the word "sailor" Tim's face would flush, his eyes would sparkle, and he would say, with emotion:

"Howly saints, Larry, what is-ut ye're tellin' me?"

"'Tis the honest trut," Larry would answer, "an' we had the *great* time. Comin' back across the drill field at First Post, be jabers, I saw three moons dancin' in the sky; an' I passed the sintry walkin' on a goolden cloud o' glory."

Tim would regard his friend with deep earnestness, and inquire:

"Larry, man, is there anny pickin's left, honey?"

Larry would curl his nose again, and with a wink and a sniff would answer:

"Whist! To-night, at the Anchor Brewery!"

Then Tim would rise up, pull off his tunic, reach down his soap and towel, and start for the lavatory, without a word.

A "sailor" was the slang term for any person whose nature was so generous, and whose finances so sound, as to allow of the quaffing of many cups at his personal charge. A "sailor" was to a thirsty Ramchunder what a carcase is to the eagles. No Ramchunder worthy of his corps ever wasted a "sailor." With a "sailor" in the offing, even politics had to wait; for the Rooshians and the Prooshians were always with us, but a "sailor" was the gift of Fate.

XV.

HUMAN DOCUMENTS.

One does not often meet such a character as Private Augustus Cashman outside the covers of a romance. He was a sparely built man, of five-feet-nine, with rather crooked legs. He had regular features, good teeth, black hair, and grey eyes, one of which had a strong squint. His voice was remarkable—a soft, caressing tenor. He was a most harmless and amiable fellow; but quite mad.

Now a mad Irishman is a being full of bewildering possibilities. Cashman loved big words, and used them prodigally. He sang strange Irish ballads as only an Irishman could sing them. He performed quaint gymnastic antics, and danced grotesque jigs, and when the moon was propitious he prayed weird prayers, in a mad blend of Erse, English, and Latin.

It was said of "Gustus" that out in India he had been made

a prisoner for making love to the colonel's daughter, whose pony he kissed one day on the grand parade.

On moonlight nights he had been known to go into the field or the forest and pray, having first lighted all round him a circle of wax vestas stuck in the earth.

I have myself seen him open a barrack-room window, kneel upon the window-sill in his shirt, and pray to the moon.

It was told of him that one day, when the tea was too sweet, he reported it to the orderly officer in his best language, and that the officer asked the colour-sergeant to translate.

Orderly Officer : "Any complaints?"

Private Cashman : "Yes, sir."

Orderly Officer : "What is wrong?"

Private Cashman : "If you please, sorr, the superfluity of the sugar destroys the flavourality of the tay, and renders it obnoxious to the human palate."

Orderly Officer : "Colour-Sergeant Saunders, what does he mean?"

The Colour-Sergeant : "He's a fool, sir."

Orderly Officer : "Take his name down."

Cashman being what he was, and our two London recruits being what they were, relations were soon strained. The recruits roasted Cashman, and Cashman reviled the recruits. Cashman's oaths were peculiar, his denunciations picturesque. The recruits—were from London.

Cashman would mount to the bread-shelf to search for a piece of bread which he had left, or pretended to have left, for tea. He would glare round the room and ask : "Which of you voracious and dishonourable ring-tailed varmint has devoured me tay bread?"

Wilsher would open the ball.

"Why, you pigeon-nosed, hungry Irish beastie, you scoffed it yourself."

"See, see, see!" Cashman would splutter. "By the holy, flying, jumping, tearing, whipping cripple, if I detect any grammivorous Cockney rodent in the act of abstracting sustenance from my accumulation, I'll peel the hide off him. I swear it by King Corney Cass, me ancestor!"

This would fetch Burridge, who would ask the constellations to listen to this Irish goat with a face like Sweeney Todd.

Gustus would spring to the floor and dance a war dance. "See, see, see," he would shout, "you million times accursed black pig of Beelzebub; you shameless product of seven generations of infamy; you mangy loot wollah born on a dunghill, you have robbed Augustus Cashman of his tay bread; and you shall die."

"Gar on, Jack Sheppard," Wilsher would strike in. "You

go and chuck yerself out o' winder and say "'Ere goes nothink.'"

"Don't talk to the animal," Burrige would say; "he's always savage when he's lost his bone."

"See here, you pusillanimus pariah dogs," Cashman would reply. "I'm the smartest man in your regiment; and the sergeants know it, and the officers know it, and the colonel's daughter was in love with me in Morar."

"Liar!" would be Wilsher's comment; and then Cashman would throw a boot at his head, and Burrige would answer with a pipeclay-box; and the two recruits would break into a chant: "Who kissed the nose of the pony of the daughter of the colonel of the regiment on the parade of the Governor-General of *Bombay*?"

At this point I would interfere to prevent bloodshed, for it was a fact that Cashman, who hated recruits in the general, had a liking for me in particular.

Cashman's ally in his war with the "ring-tails" was his countryman, William Ryan, known as Ryan the Beauty. Ryan was a curious human document. When sober he was melancholy, almost morose, and would sit and read a dog-eared volume of Irish ballads, or croon a mournful song:

"Oh, what will ye do, love, when I am goin',
Wid white sail flowin', the seas beyond?"

But after a visit to the canteen he was translated. Then he would burst suddenly into the barrack-room with a yell: "Yeho! Here's Bill Ryan, yeho! Here's Bill Ryan the Beauty, yeho! Why don't yez turn out the guard?"

In this mood he would often throw the tea basins into the coal-box, dance a jig on the table; challenge any six Saxon spalpeens to "stand fornnist" him, and conclude the exhibition by bursting into tears.

Here is a fancy sketch of a conversation in which myself, Cashman, and the Beauty took part. It was after a visit of the two veterans to the canteen.

Private B.: "The Ramchunders have seen service, Gustus?"

Ryan: "Deed, yes. Mooltan, Guzerat, Muzzerfernugger——"

Cashman: "Put a period to yere declamatory garrulity, William. Do yez not observe that the child desiderates information?"

Ryan: "The Lord look sideways on yez, Gustus, ye're a goat."

Private B.: "Was the regiment in the Mutiny?"

Ryan: "The divil a bit of it. But if it had been——"

Cashman : " Will yez mark time, avic ? 'Twould be ludicrous for me to prevaricate, boy——"

Ryan : " Don't heed him, 'cruity ; he's only a mad Con-naught man."

Cashman : " Ye lie, Bill Ryan. Ye will have prognosticated, youngster, that this soldier is an untutored pisant from the County Clare."

Ryan : " Lie down, you scutterin' fool. *Here's* Bill Ryan. *Here's* Bill Ryan the Beauty, yeho ! Why don't yez stand to attention ?"

Cashman : " Shame roost in yere bosom, Ryan, 'tis witless yez are."

Ryan : " Gustus, darlin', ye're drunk."

Cashman : " I disdain to bandy recriminations wid a Clare man."

Ryan : " I'm afther houldin' discoorse wid a pig."

Cashman : " William, ye're a smart soldier, but yez have no crudition."

Ryan : " Gustus, ye're a bosthoon ; but if anny baste says ye're not a credit to the corps I'll lick him till he can't sleep."

Cashman : " Bill, you're a man of eloquence and an exemplar of rectitude, and if ye'll attend me to the canteen I'll felicitate yez in a pot of porter."

When the two cronies had departed I was left alone in No. 3 Room, as usual, for in the evenings all the other men went to the canteen or to the town. Then, since I knew that most of them would return at the last minute, and some of them with vine-leaves in their hair, I would tidy up the place and make down all the beds.

Often between the First and Last Posts at Tattoo I found myself holding a bed of state, with five or six hilarious Fusiliers seated round me, relating their adventures or cheering me with their friendly talk.

They were strangely friendly to me, these men, and their manner towards me was a blend of respect and protection. I, on my side, felt quite at home with them, for I had already realised that among those dozen of rough, wild, and odd soldiers there was not one with a mean or a bad drop of blood in him.

Dimly, as in a glass darkly, I had begun to feel that the code of the world I had left was too narrow and too weak for the world into which I had come. Judged by that old code, these were bad men. But my own sense told me that they were not bad men, but good men.

I had begun a new education. I was learning and unlearning. I was getting a fresh and a wider understanding of the humanities, and my instructors were a handful of illiterate, dissolute, profane, and drunken soldiers.

XVI.

THE VETERANS.

One of my chief delights was in the talk of the Crimean and Mutiny veterans, of whom we had many in our regiment. It was not easy to get an old soldier to talk about his battles, but a quart of beer and a little coaxing generally brought a rich return. Perhaps, too, journalism runs in the blood. At any rate, I had many a graphic story from our old soldiers, and being blessed with a memory which could dispense with notebooks I forgot nothing I heard.

There was in C Company a private named Harrison, a very spruce, grim little man, with several medals. Him I tried more than once with indifferent success, but I was patient, and tried again. First I would ask his opinion of the Army of that day as compared with the Army of the Crimea. Then I would listen while he assured me that the Service was going to the devil.

Then I would drop in an artful question.

"Of course, they must have been good men in those days. It takes good soldiers to go through a battle like Inkerman or Alma. You were at the Alma, weren't you?"

"Yes. I saw the first man killed there that I ever did see killed."

"Oh?"

"Yes. He wasn't hit. A round shot struck the ground a yard in front of him, and went into the clay under his feet. It shot him up into the air, and he came down dead."

"Not hit?"

"No. I think he ruptured his heart."

"Ah! It would be warm work, I suppose."

"Yes. It was very pretty to see. Our lines and the French lines marching up, like a picture. The fire was thick. We lost a power of men. Our colonel was a tartar—very strict. And we went up like as if we'd been marching past on parade. Thirty inches to the pace, a hundred and sixteen paces to the minute; butts drawn back, and thumbs at the seam of the trousers."

"I see. What about the colonel?"

"Oh! Well, as we were marching up, a chap named Donovan who'd got a bit excited, being eager to get at 'em, pushed half a pace in front of the line."

"Well, the colonel squints down the line and sees him, and he calls out: "Dress back, Donovan; dress back. You'll spoil the whole affair."

"Cool customer."

"Yes. He was. Just as he said it his horse was shot under him. But he popped up quite calm, and calls out: 'Fusiliers, I'm all right!'"

"Did you get hit, Harrison?"

"No."

"Did you kill anybody?"

This question almost invariably shut the veterans' mouths. Harrison gave me a queer look, and changed the subject.

But when I came to interview Micky Harrington, of G Company, I got a surprise. Wishing to apply the test at once, I put the test question first:

"Micky, did you ever kill a man?"

Micky's answer startled me.

"Kill a man?" said he. "'Deed, I couldn't rest in me bed if I thought I hadn't!"

"But don't you know?"

Micky stroked his moustache and looked me in the eye.

"Perhaps I do know," said he. "Yes, begad, I know, and I'll tell you the truth. 'Twas a thing I'm not proud of. We was out in the Quarries on sharpshooting duty. Three of us was lying down together, and we saw a Russian sentry on a bridge inside Sebastopol. One said he was 900 yards off, another said 850, and another 800. We argued about it, and at last we each put his sight to the distance he thought, and we all fired together.

"The man dropped, begad, and we didn't know who'd killed him. It's a thing I don't feel quite easy about. It seemed like killing a man in cold blood! 'Twas the fortune of war, of course. But—ah, well, I hope my bullet missed him, begad! I do, man, surely."

"You had rough times there, Micky. Hard winter?"

"Hard? 'Twould nip pieces out of you. But what troubled me most was the hunger. I was a youngster then, with a big appetite and a small conscience—as small as ever was packed in a wicked devil's kit.

"I mind one night I'd been in the trenches diggin'. I was fearfully sharp-set, and I could not sleep with the hunger. Jock Hunter had half a loaf in his knapsack. I saw him stow it away. I knew he'd refuse a bite to his own father, and I decided not to ask him. But whenever he was asleep I drew the knapsack from under his head and got out the bread, and put the knapsack back. You wonder at it. But out there, begad, men were that wearied they slept like the dead. So I got his bread. I stole it. I was a thief! Oh, the hungry thief I was!

"And I durst not eat it in the tent. I might have left a few

crumbs to betray me. So I crept out and sat down in the snow and ate every little morsel of it up, begad, and I believe I was hungrier than before. But I got to sleep, I did. And, oh, what a devil of a shindy there was in the morning ! ”

Encouraged by my success in obtaining this grim story, I pressed Micky again.

“ You would see some warm work at Sebastopol, Micky ? ”

“ Oh, ’twas the great fun ! ”

“ Fun ? ”

“ ’Twas fun, begad,” says Micky ; and goes on to relate the following story :

“ The advanced trenches was close up to the walls. Devil a one durst show his head. When we wanted a shot we’d hold up a shako on a ramrod to draw the Russian fire, then pop up and take our shot, and down again sharp, begad

“ Well, one day a French doctor came up to the angle where I was. You could see right into Sebastopol from there, and he was very keen to look. So we told him if he did he’d be shot, begad ; and he says, ‘ Pooh, pooh,’ says he, ‘ I must look,’ says he ; and, begad, he did look, and, begad, he was shot—shot through the head.

“ Well, we heard as his brother was a French colonel, and we carried his body four miles until we found his brother. He said we was two fine fellows, and he gave us each a bottle of wine, and some bread and meat, and some money, and said his poor brother was ‘ over valiant ’ ; and we went back to our lines.

“ I thought his brother was a silly fool, for I said, ‘ You’ll be shot if you do, begad, and he looked ; ’ begad, and he was shot dead.”

One of the closest men I met with in these historical researches of mine was William Reilly, called the Angel Gabriel. This man was very dour and silent, and had to be thawed out with abundance of beer.

On several occasions I drew blank ; but one evening I took him to the canteen and did him well, and all at once he opened his heart and spoke.

“ Fighting in the Crimea. Yes. Plenty of that. But it wasn’t the fighting mattered ; one has to fight. It was the cursed climate. And other things. We wasn’t properly clothed, nor half fed. It was cruelly cold. We used to wrap straw round our arms and legs at night to keep from being frost-bitten. For many a month I wore two odd boots, and had never a shirt to my back. My last shirt I washed one day and hung out to dry, and a mule came and ate it all but one sleeve. Sentry duty was bad and hard. You had to look out sharp or the Rooshians would sling a fireball out

and follow it with a round shot. Yes; and they'd come out of their works and drive us back on our pickets, and even out of the trenches as much as five or six times in a night.

"Inkerman? Yes; I was at Inkerman. Oh, there's nothing to tell. Inkerman was fought on a foggy morning. It was cold and raw, and we turned out without bite or sup, and the enemy was on us in a flash. The Rooshians was eight to one. They was well fed, and primed with drink. They had more guns than what we had. And our ammunition soon gave out, and then it was the bayonet. I don't know much about it, that's God's truth! The fog was that thick I don't believe the generals knew where the men was. The Rooshians fought steady and stubborn. We was all mixed; it was Donnybrook. Every man fighting for his own hand. I was shot in the leg, and—and I got this besides."

Gabriel held up his left hand and showed me a thick scar between the forefinger and the thumb.

"How was that?" I asked.

"Bayonet wound. How did I get it? It was in one of the rushes. There was a many rushes. A Rooshian made a point at me, and I parried, and his bayonet slipped down the barrel of my rifle and cut my hand."

"What became of the Russian?"

"Eh? Oh, *him*? It was a nasty cut. Bayonet wounds often turns to running sores. This did. I was in hospital three months."

"But, Gabriel, what became of the Russian?"

Gabriel emptied his beer-can, and said:

"Won't you have a drink with me, chummy?"

I said I was an abstainer; and I told the canteen waiter to refill Gabriel's can.

Then I talked to my man about the Indian Mutiny. He told me of the relief of Lucknow, and how his company had to cross a bridge on a steep road under fire. "The captain says: 'Yonder's your bridge, men. Run for it. Run like blazes!' And we did run, I give you my word. I never ran so fast before, nor since. And we was not only running through the fire, we was running into it. Devilish hot that was. They shot the top off my ear, and the ball off my shako. They bored two holes through the stock of my rifle, and they nipped off the end of my little finger. I was glad to get off so cheap. When you come to think of it, it makes you wonder as a single blessed man was left alive. Man, it rained bullets. It was the thickest bit I was in."

"It was a hard war that, Reilly."

"Yes. It was bitter. The Sepoys hated us like poison, and we hated them. There was no quarter—neither side.

I have seen six Sepoy prisoners hung on one tree. I have seen 'em blown away from the muzzles of field guns. We was all like wild beasts. You see they'd killed some of our women and children. And when we was fighting to relieve Lucknow we knew there was women and children inside there, and what would happen to 'em if we failed to get in.

"Ah! It was a horrible business. In one of the rushes our chaps got mixed with some Highlanders. God! you never saw anything like those Scotchmen. They was blood from head to heels. They used their bayonets like devils; and all the time they laughed. They was mad. So was our chaps.

"When we got in the women kissed us. They did, by Christ! I saw an officer's lady hugging a big Highlander, and him all over blood. She kissed him. She did. And one woman brought a kid to me. A girl with curls as white as tow. I'm a wicked beast, chummy, but, d'ye know, I cried over that kid. I thought if we'd been driven back. If we'd been too late. You know—you've read about the kids—and the women."

I let Gabriel talk on, but when he was well down in his second can I asked him, in a casual way :

"By the by, Reilly, what about that Russian?"

"Which Rooshian?"

"The one who did *that*."

"Oh, yes. *Him*."

"Did you kill him?"

Gabriel took up his pot, sighed, drank, put down the pot, and said simply: "Well, if I hadn't, you know, he'd have killed me."

Often after that, when I used to see Micky Harrington sitting in the sun quietly cleaning his belts, or Reilly with Prayer-book in hand standing up in church, I would remember where those men had been, what they had suffered and done.

Years afterwards, in Cardiff, a quaint idea occurred to me. I was talking to Gabriel, who was on guard with me, and had just read the clasps on his Crimean medal—the clasps for Alma, Inkerman, and Sebastopol—when all at once I said to him:

"Gabriel, what was the Crimean War about?"

"About? What was it about? I never rightly understood. I think it was a row between the Russians and the Turks, and we went to help the Turks."

"And which was in the right, the Turks or the Russians, Gabriel?"

Gabriel shook his head.

"That's more than I knew," he said. "'Twas no business of ours, do ye see? And I can tell you there was devilish little time for asking questions out there."

XVII.

SENTRY-GO.

So we were dismissed to duty. Duty means work. It means guard, which implies eight hours of sentry-go; it means picket, a most dismal duty; and it means all kinds of "fatigues," from grass-picking on the gravel square to washing up dishes in the officers' or sergeants' mess. We did not like the dish-washing business; it was the work of menials. Washing one's own dishes was all right, but washing the dishes of superior officers is another thing.

I only did one guard as a private, and so my share of sentry-go was limited to eight hours.

I may remark for the benefit of the uninitiated that a guard lasts twenty-four hours; that there are three men to each post, so that each sentry has four hours' rest between each two hours' work. I may also remark that to walk up and down a short beat in quick time, carrying a rifle and fixed bayonet at the "shoulder" or "support," is neither easy nor amusing.

The worst feature of sentry-go is its monotony. For this reason the No. 1 post, on the guard-room, is the best, as one has there more to do. On most posts one has nothing to do but to learn by heart the orders for the post.

Now, a board of orders for a sentry is the most unappetising literature I have ever sampled. It is always written in the official Army style, which is a style of rickety grammar, wooden verbosity, and heavy-footed fatuity to be found nowhere outside the official world.

My old friend Private William Dawson, familiarly called "Whisky Bill," was a man of taste and culture. He used to say that the most-needed Army reform was the establishment of a department for introducing jokes and pictures into the orders on sentries' order-boards.

"At the least," Bill would say wistfully, "they might give us grammar, and spare us stupidity." But the War Office never had a sense of humour.

Some of these order-boards contain fifteen or twenty paragraphs—often as much as a thousand words. Many of the orders are trivial, as half the posts are unnecessary; and it is no light task for any ordinary man to get by heart so

much uninteresting and clumsily worded detail. So Tommy "fakes" the orders according to the officer of the day. Some officers are particular about one detail, some about another. Tommy "gets the tip."

"Who's officer of the day?" asks the man for guard.

"Feet," is the curious answer.

"Good," is the brief comment. That means that Captain Dabchick, who is a handsome man and very vain, has enormous feet. Tommy knows him. Therefore, when he asks the sentry for his orders, Tommy fixes his gaze on the officer's boots and opens fire on the first paragraph: "Take charge of all Government property within view of the post," etc., etc.

As the sentry goes on, the captain gets red in the face, and at the second paragraph gives the word "Shoulder arms," and marches off to have his feet inspected at the next post.

Another officer is very particular about "suspicious characters," or "improper persons," or "loiterers molesting the cannon"; and Tommy loads himself to the muzzle with that special kind of ammunition and sinks his man with the first broadside.

A sentry in a bearskin hat, with a rifle and a fixed bayonet, looks very fierce and tremendous, but he always seemed to me the most helpless impostor in all our national make-believe. A policeman without so much as a truncheon is ten times more useful and effective.

For the sentry dare not use his weapon. I never saw a board of orders on which a sentry was directed to use his bayonet or to fire his rifle.

I used to amuse myself by asking our men questions. "Suppose two men came up and refused to stop when you said they must not pass. What would you do?" Discussion invariably resulted in general agreement that a rifle and bayonet are an incumbrance. A policeman would collar the men and blow his whistle.

Once in Aldershot a man—said to be an officer—disguised himself as Springheeled Jack. This man used to attack the sentries at night. He would rush the post, try to disarm the sentry, and then get away.

Several sentries were disarmed, and were punished severely. Then one sentry fired at the assailant, and missed him. He was tried by court-martial for "making away with a round of ammunition."

On service, or in war time, a sentry knows his work. He is always on the alert, his rifle is loaded, and, if attacked, he fires. The only useful sentries on home service are "bayonet sentries"—without the rifle.

The main guard at Parkhurst had one small advantage

so far as concerned No. 1 post. This was the order for the sentry to go outside the gate on his beat to "look out for Royal carriages." It was a small favour, but Tommy appreciated it, and on the occasion of my one guard it provided me with a smile, for I heard Lance-Sergeant Mick Patterson remark to the man (a young soldier) on No. 1 post. "Yus, yus. Going beyant the gate to look for Royal carriages is one thing; but going across the road picking blackberries is another, bedad, and don't ye be afther doin' ut."

"Sentry-go" at night is rather more serious, for there are officers who think it is clever to get Tommy into trouble. There was one, a captain, who used to put on soft slippers, hold his sword up, and sneak along in the shadow until he was close to the sentry, when he would make a prisoner of him for not challenging in time.

The trick was safe enough in piping times of peace; in more strenuous times the captain who tried it would most certainly be shot. However, we cured our spy.

One dark night we put a man to watch the captain and warn the sentry; and we told the sentry to wait until the officer was near him, and then to give a loud yell and come to the charge. The sentry obeyed, and, meeting the officer at the end of his beat, where he was not expected, challenged in a voice that could be heard all over the fort, and brought his bayonet down to the charge so close to the captain's nose that the gallant officer got quite a nasty jar.

He made the man a prisoner; but he had to call me as evidence, and I managed to give the captain away, so that the sentry was let off and the officer was snubbed.

When I came out of the orderly-room the sergeant-major spoke to me. "That was a nice yarn you spun the colonel, sergeant."

"It was quite true, sir."

"True! Of course it was true. And it's true you'll lose your stripes if you tell the truth too often."

"The sentry did his duty, sir. I had to say so."

"H'm!—yes. The captain had soft slippers, hadn't he?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ha! Not soldiering, by gad! But don't you be a green-horn. If I were sergeant of the guard I wouldn't risk my stripes if the officer of the day came flying round on a broomstick. Be careful. It's every man for himself here, and the weakest to the wolves."

The "major" meant well. But I had had my own ideas of conduct, and I took the risks. It is odd, but true, that

those men who fear the risks of doing right do not seem to realise the risks of doing wrong. Anyhow, the captain never sneaked again.

XVIII.

THE SINGING LINNET.

Pickets patrol in slow time. As I said, picket duty is dismal. Hour after hour the patrol crawls along the streets, close to the gutter; the monotony being broken only by the unpleasant episode of an arrest.

Sometimes it is Private Maltus, or Private O'Donnybrook, in the condition known to Tommy Atkins as "drunk and Irish"; which phrase explains itself. Such a man has to be seized and marched off a prisoner. If he fights—and it is of the essence of the D. and I. to fight gleefully and without regard to a hereafter—then he has to be carried à la "frog's march." Now, to carry a kicking, biting, blaspheming lunatic a mile through the public streets is not, as the French say, "amusing." Neither is it amusing to go into a public-house and sort out a couple of scapegoats from a raging *melée* of twenty able-bodied soldiers, navvies, and militiamen who are merrily trying to perform the happy dispatch upon each other with belts, bottles, tumblers, and pewter pots.

I remember once in Newport, Mon., one Private Moffat, on a Sunday evening, as the good folks were coming out of church, did take it into his head that certain Saxons needed thrashing, and that they could only be thrashed properly by Michael Moffat, and only by him when divested of every article of raiment. Moffat got half way through his toilet, and was then rudely interfered with by the civil power, who locked him up in the town-hall.

When I called about 10 a.m. to collect my gallant comrade, the sergeant of police looked very serious and warned me that Michael was dangerous.

"He's a murderous chap, sergeant; he swears he will kill anyone who goes near him. He's in a cell, and his language is awful. He has injured two of our constables and has broken a form."

"Fetch him out," said I.

A constable opened the door, and Moffat burst into the office with a yell, and looked about him for a weapon. But I knew him.

"Stop that, Moffat," I said, in a grim sergeant's voice. "I'm going to take you to barracks. Fall in here. Corporal Amies, take the prisoner."

Moffat glared at us.

"If I go to barracks, sergeant," said he, "I'll be carried, so help me Jasus! You hear me."

The picket fell in quickly. No one spoke, and I gave the word "Quick march!" upon which, to the amazement of the civil police, we marched off without a sound.

But we had not done with Moffat yet, as I knew. Directly we left the streets he lay down in the mud.

"Now, ye blaggards," said he, "ye'll carry Mr. Moffat home; and the divvle thank yez!"

Now, to carry a twelve-stone lunatic a mile across rough and spongy fields in the dark was no treat. I decided to bluff my man.

"Corporal Amies," I said, in a voice like a stage villain, "place two men behind the prisoner, two on each side, and two in front. Send four men ahead, and let four keep behind. Picket, draw your bayonets. Now, men, if the prisoner halts or attempts to escape, *stab him*."

After this ferocious speech I drew my sword, and calmly proceeded to bore a minute hole in Moffat.

Moffat arose, and we looked at each other. Then we marched home to barracks without the smallest trouble. And the joke of it was that we dare not have scratched the rascal's skin if he had fought, and we must have carried him if he refused to walk; but he was not sober enough to understand, and my fierce looks and the cold-blooded promptitude of Jack Amies quite imposed upon him.

However, it was of my first turn on picket that I meant to speak, and that was in the other Newport—Newport, Isle of Wight.

We prowled about as usual for some hours, and nothing came of it. Then Bonass, the provost-sergeant, came and took me away. Bonass was a character, and not an amiable character, but of that anon. He had a hang-dog face, a snuffling, snarly voice, and he swore profusely. Also he was cruel, relentless, and treacherous. He took me down the High Street to the end of a narrow lane called Paradise Row.

"Now," he said, "this — street is out of bounds. See? Understand? No — soldiers are allowed down there. Draw your bayonet. Stay here till I relieve you. See? Don't allow any — soldier to pass. If you *do*—you'll be for the *clink*. Understand? You're a recruit, aren't you?"

"Yes, sergeant."

"Very well. You obey orders, or you'll get a — court-martial, and I'll cut your — hair to the — roots. Understand?" And he went away.

It was a beautiful summer evening, and, being late, the

streets were quite quiet. I walked up and down for some time without any incident. Then out of the shadow across the High Street there came unsteadily the figure of a soldier. It was Larry Dolan—Larry, with a good many buttons unfastened, no waistbelt, and his cap set crosswise on his head. Larry, in a condition which suggested that he had just left a "sailor."

Larry approached my post. Larry wanted to go down Paradise Row. Larry halted in front of me, and screwed his little eyes up till they were mere sparks, and performed wonders with his prehensile nose, which reminded one of the movements of an elephant's trunk. Smiling a mysterious smile, Larry said, in a husky voice :

"Ullo ! Whist ! I'm on a mark."

"You cannot pass here, Dolan."

"Per—Per—Private Doolan, please, shentry. Not so mushyer blooming Doolan. She ? 'M on a mark."

"No road this way. Halt !"

"Halt ! Who ye hal—hal—tin' ? Got appointment with a friend. Lemme pash."

"No road. Halt !"

"Why, why—it's a ring-tail 'cruity. Standsh shide. May way. 'M on a mark. Donsher unstansh ? I'm on a bloomin' mark."

"Go away. This street's out of bounds."

"Look—look 'ere, 'cruity. I'll report you. She ? I'll see colonel 'bout it—morninsh ! Want to she friend. Bushinsh ! Mos' respectable man—keeps beershop."

"Get, Dolan. Quick. There's the picket." Dolan reeled away.

A little while afterwards, through the sweet, still air of the summer night, came the sound of a sweet voice—a girl's voice—singing. It was very curious. The voice drew nearer, now sounding more clearly as the singer came into the straight, now more faint as she turned the corner. Presently she appeared, just as Larry had appeared, from the same shadowy opening—the lane that led to the Anchor Inn.

She was a slight, fair, and pretty girl, a mere child of sixteen, with a light, sweet voice of a fine quality, and she was singing "The Rocky Road to Dublin."

She crossed the road unsteadily—she had been drinking—came straight up to me, and laid her small hand on my breast to steady herself. She had a mouth like the opening bud of a flower, small white teeth, and large blue eyes ; but the eyes were swimming and vacant, for the child was quite intoxicated. Now, I was a romantic boy, as I have said, and not yet one-and-twenty, and when that little girl laid her hand upon me and

gazed at me with a pitiful drunken gravity, I did not feel happy.

"Whose little soldier are you?" asked "the singing linnet." That is what I learnt the soldiers called her.

"I belong to the Queen," I said.

The girl laughed.

"So," she said, "you're the Queen's little soldier. Well, if the lady gave a shilling for you, she ought to have ninepence change. Will you come and have a drink?"

"You had better go home, child," I said ruefully.

The girl laughed again.

"You're a silly little soldier," she said. "I'm goin' 'ome. There's my 'ome—down there. I live in Paradise. Good-night, 'cruity"; and she gave me a push, blew me a kiss, and staggered away singing, "I want to be an angel."

I listened to her voice until it died away in the scented dusk of the summer night, and I thought three columns of uncheerful thoughts when she was gone.

All the pity of it, all the tragedy of it stood out before me with horrible distinctness! I felt years older.

When Bonass came to send me back to barracks I was standing like a wooden soldier—I had seen the Gorgon's head.

CHAPTER XIX.

TRAINING THAT MAKES MEN.

The change wrought by the Army life among the recruits was astonishing. In four months louts became soldiers; boys were transformed into men. In June there tramped through the Parkhurst gate a mob of pale-faced, weedy ragamuffins. In September those ragamuffins with town stoop and the town slouch had become clean, well-groomed, alert, upstanding young soldiers, with bronzed faces, muscular limbs, and bright eyes.

The way the boys grew was more wonderful than the way they filled out. There was one frail little fellow, who certainly was not fifteen years of age, and was too weak to pull himself up on the horizontal bar, and in a dozen weeks or so he was a tall, smart young man, who could go through all the gymnastic exercises, and could throw his rifle about like a walking-stick.

I met this youngster three years later (he deserted from ours), and he was big drummer in a line regiment, stood 6ft. 2in. in his stockings, and weighed nearly fifteen stone.

I had always been a delicate boy, and I do not think I had ever known what it was to feel well until I went for a soldier.

I was thin and pale and languid. I had been nine years in a factory town, working long hours in a smoky, dusty building, getting but short-commons, and hardly ever leaving the town.

Then I found myself in the Isle of Wight in the summer, getting good and regular food, going to bed early, and living an athletic and active life in the open air. Every morning I began with a run of a thousand yards on the grass under the elms. Then I went through the appointed portion of my gymnastic training ; then I spent hours marching or running on the open parade, or performing the bayonet exercise or position drill. If I went out of barracks I had to walk smartly and to hold myself erect. It is easy to guess the result of such a change.

We were new men. We were full of health. We felt as if we had trebled our lung power. We had learned to move and to walk. We felt as if we were walking on a cloud, as if our feet hardly touched the ground. We could all of us jump or vault the horse, climb ropes and walls, walk along a thin pole, do simple feats on the rings or the bar, use the bayonet, and move easily and steadily at the double-march for a long time. We were what the drill-sergeants called "set up." It is good to be "set up," it feels good.

For my part I am convinced that this training saved my life. I was not the same man. My complexion was copper ; my eyes, as Tommy says, were "jumping out of my head." I could eat two pounds of dry bread at a meal, and could sleep on a nine-inch form without a pillow, and sleep well. We were all like that ; and those of us who took care of ourselves remained like that.

Since I left the Army, which is more than thirty years ago, I have lived a sedentary life, sometimes for years at a stretch. I have sat at a desk in a small room day after day for months, and never stepped outside the door. But I have never lost the power to recover my form.

Now I am getting on for sixty years of age, and after a winter spent indoors, with no exercise and little air, I can get myself fit and well with a fortnight's cricket. Between the end of April and the end of May I seem to slough off twenty years. And I am convinced that all this is due to the training I got in the Army ; which I got just at the right time, and just in the right way.

And now I want to say that every girl and boy should be carefully and sensibly developed, exercised, and set up ; and that there is, in my opinion, no better method of setting up than the method of military training.

Gymnastics are good ; field-sports are good ; dumb-bells and calisthenics are good ; but the beauty of the Army training

is twofold ; for, in the first place, it is continuous, a soldier must *always* walk smartly, and bear himself correctly ; and, in the second place, military training implies collective action, the moving and working in close order as parts of an organic whole.

For the great difference between a regiment and a mob is that while the mob is an inchoate, disunited crowd of isolated individuals, a regiment is a trained, united, and sentient organism. Break a mob, and it will disperse, or scatter ; break a regiment, and the parts will hold together and will struggle to unite.

When a few police attack a crowd of undrilled men, who are strangers to each other, the crowd instinctively opens out and scatters ; but attack a scattered crowd of drilled men, and they instinctively "close up."

The fact is, a regiment has a collective soul.

The Ramchunders is something more than a thousand men in uniform ; it is—the Ramchunders. Break it up into fragments, and the fragments will rally together, back to back, with their bayonets outwards. And this collective spirit is not bad ; it is good.

No man who has ever drilled with a regiment, or marched with a column, or taken part in the evolutions of a brigade, can imagine the spirit of collectivism of which I write. To him the idea of a corporate mind and soul is unthinkable. Let him do the bayonet exercise in close order front and rear rank back to back ; let him run in from the firing line and form rallying squares ; and he will begin to understand what the words "regiment," "nation," and "community" mean.

Such is the moral effect of military drill. But the physical effect is closely allied. See a regiment fix bayonets like one man, and in a flash, as it were, of steel ; see a Highland regiment march past in line—and you will realise the value of that concerted elan and restraint. But to get the value for yourself you must "go through the mill." A soldier is a more fully developed and a more completely organised man than a civilian. He has certain muscular and spiritual faculties developed which in the untrained man are dormant.

Dr. H. Miller Maguire said to me once :

"Peace or no peace, I'd have every man trained to arms. If there was never to be another fight I'd drill every male thing. By George, I'd have universal military service in heaven!"

During the German manœuvres of 1899 I acted as correspondent for the "Morning Leader." One day, as I was crouching among the pines in the Black Forest during a tremendous thunderstorm, a brigade of Prussian infantry came

marching through the forest, splashing in the mud, and singing through the thunder and the rain.

The effect on me was electrical. This was IT! I jumped up, ran to the troops, and marched with them into the village. The rain ran down my back and out of my boots, the lightning tore the branches off the trees, the mud was ankle deep; we were tired; we were hungry; but we were soldiers—all of us.

The mere nationality did not matter. We were IT!

Another day I marched with a great column of Prussian Guards in a sham attack on some vineyards. There must have been 20,000 men in those attacking columns, and as they strode along with fixed bayonets the hundreds of drums beat until every pulse responded.

These were no countrymen of mine. I did not know a word of their language. The fight was only a sham.

But we were IT. We were all soldiers. We had only one soul.

I fear I have expressed my meaning very badly. I am not sure that the cleverest writer could convey that idea fully to an undrilled mind; but any soldier will understand at once.

The fact is that the drilling of masses of men together makes for community of thought and feeling; makes a crowd into a regiment; makes a rabble into a nation; develops in the men a new faculty of humanism.

I am strongly in favour of compulsory universal military training.

XX.

FIGHTING MACHINE OR CIRCUS?

Before we had been many months in the Service some of us boys had begun to ask each other questions about the British Army.

Our attitude of mind may be expressed in the words of Private Clancy Sullivan, a Cockney Irishman, quite illiterate, but acute and witty: "Is this," Clancy asked one day, "a fightin' machine, or a blinkin' circus?"

The self-appointed commission of recruits voted unanimously for the circus.

It was not a fighting machine. It was not trained solely, nor even principally, for war. It was not adapted to its ostensible purpose. We were only boys, we had no experience,

but we could see the defects in the Army; they were too palpable to be missed.

But when we presumed to ventilate our heresies in the presence of the old hands we were snubbed unmercifully.

"God bless my soul!" said old Bob Maxwell, the sergeant shoemaker, when I fired my first criticism at him. Is the Service to be criticised by a smooth-faced boy who hasn't been five minutes in his ammunition boots? Do you think you know more about soldiering than General Hope Grant? The British Army has always been good enough in the field. Go and get your hair cut."

But we were right, and the good old sergeant was wrong.

Later, when some of us recruits were sergeants, and marksmen, and certificated instructors, I had many a duel with older soldiers in the sergeants' mess, and the verdict was always the same among the veterans—that we were a parcel of impertinent young jackanapes, and ought to be sat upon severely.

But I have lived to see nearly all our criticisms verified; and many of the alterations we suggested have long since been made.

What were the awful heresies we uttered? We said that the uniforms were not fit for the field, that the men were not taught to shoot, that not one man in 500 could use a bayonet effectively against sword or bayonet, that the officers did not take their work seriously, and did not even know the drill-book drill, that there was no instruction in taking cover, that the men had no practice in making trenches, that battalion parades were too stereotyped, that there was not enough training in brigades and divisions, that scouting was not known, that too much time was wasted on mere pageantry, marching past, manual exercise, and other nonsense. All these criticisms were sound, every one of them. Read the reports in the Press of the periods of the Zulu War and the two wars against the Boers.

To begin with, take the dress and accoutrements. Scarlet and pipeclay and brass. Ask any man who has been out for a week's manœuvres in wet weather what happened to him.

An hour's heavy rain washed the pipeclay off the belts all over the scarlet cloth. The buckles when wet made dark stains on the tunic, the buff belts, ball-pouches, and slings became sodden and greasy. One good drenching for an hour meant three or four days' hard work getting one's arms, belts, and clothing right again.

Which reminds me of the Duke of Cambridge's umbrella. There was to be a big field day at Chatham about 1878 or 1879, at which the Duke was to command. The day turned out wet

and the Duke countermanded the field day. The German Kaiser did the same thing at Karlsruhe in 1899.

But a comic journalist got hold of the Chatham story, and said the Duke had countermanded the parade because he had forgotten his umbrella. The joke was taken up by the public, and the Duke of Cambridge became "Umbrella George."

But every soldier understood why the Duke had so acted. The Duke was fond of the men, and very considerate on their account, and so was popular with the Army. He knew quite well that a day's marching and firing in the rain would mean three or four days' hard work to the soldiers before they would again be fit to be seen, and he knew that many of them would have to be put on stoppages to buy new tunics. It was not of himself he was thinking at all, but of the men.

But what astonishes me, and did astonish us youngsters, is that a man like the Duke of Cambridge, knowing the utter uselessness of the soldiers' scarlet and pipeclay for active service, should never have insisted on the substitution of a more rational and serviceable dress and equipment.

Take another case. One of the recruits said in the hearing of Sergeant Shanks that the Snider rifle block action would clog and jam in wet weather. Heavens! I thought old Shanks would have struck him dead. But a few years later, when we were on the Dartmoor manœuvres, I saw two-thirds of the men in our firing line put out of action by the jamming of the breech-blocks. I have seen the skirmishers sitting down trying to hammer the breech open with stones.

Then Armourer-Sergeant Wilson said to Instructor Mockler and me: "Thank God for the Martini; if ever we had gone on a big campaign with the Snider we should have had a disaster!"

In our regiment we wore a thing called a busby; a smaller edition of the Guards' bearskin. It was a perfectly impossible hat. On a windy day the pressure of the wind nearly stopped one from advancing; in hot weather one had one's head in a kind of Dutch oven. On one long march the cheap brass chain rubbed the skin off my chin and set up blood-poisoning. It was a sheer impossibility to shoot in such a hat.

A Fusilier, buckled and belted up tight in a scarlet tunic, with straps under his armpits, a knapsack, folded coat, and canteen on his back, with a stiff band of slippery buff in the way of his rifle-butt, and with a great fur balloon on his head, was a noble mark for an enemy's fire; and could not have shot straight himself if he had been an angel.

These things we said to the old soldiers. The old soldiers were positively rude to us. "You ought to be jolly well

birched, you impudent young cub!" said an old corporal one day to young Clarke, of F Company. "Three dozen: well laid on!" said old Private Barclay. That was because Clarke said volley-firing seemed silly. As it was under most circumstances.

I have known a colonel who had to write the commands for battalion drill on a bit of card, and one day when he lost his card he had to dismiss the parade.

I have seen a captain during an Aldershot sham fight move his company up in line with two pieces of the enemy's artillery enfilading him. And all that captain did was to shrug his shoulders, curl his moustache, and say to the colour-sergeant: "Oh, look at those guns! Oh, what are those guns?"

One day in a charge at Black Tor the captain of my company, who ran light, as he had nothing but his sword to carry, went up a hill on the top of which was a natural fort of rocks from which 200 Black Watch men were potting us. The captain went up at a run, and I went close to his heels. When we got to the flat top of the hill I was rather winded, but I began to load, and the captain said: "Fire! Damn it, sergeant, why don't you fire?"

That officer lacked imagination. He and I were as full of bullet-holes as a pair of nutmeg-graters, if he had only known it. But, of course, I fired. I was dead, I had fallen like a hero; but I fired. There was nothing to fire at, for I could see nothing but smoke; but I fired, and the captain was happy.

As for the Highlanders, they were Scotsmen; but they laughed. They *must* have laughed. Even an Eskimo would have laughed.

We had in A Company a great, big fellow named Corcoran. He was in the skirmishing line in the Long Valley, and we were advancing by rushes over the flat sand. Up came a major on horseback, and called out: "Now, then, that man; why don't you *think* of cover? Look there: get behind that branch!" The branch was a withered piece of gorse which would not have *hidden* a mackerel.

When I related this incident to my dear pal Darkey Smith, he shook his head and said: "I say, cot-mate, you go too fast. What do *you* know about taking cover?"

I said: "You can't cover a man with a stick of celery, hang it! And don't you see that while Corcoran was going to fetch the stick he must *stand up*? Don't you *see* it, Charlie? Wouldn't a straight shot from his rifle cover him better than a daffodil?"

But Charlie shook his head. "You are a clever boy, cot-

mate," said he ; " but Major Plummer ought to know better than you. Why, he's passed the Staff College ! "

" I'll tell you what it is," said Sidney Church to me one day—Sidney was an educated man, and had brains—" the fact is, these officers think we are as silly as they are."

One day some of us tackled an old Scots sergeant, who had been through the Crimea and the Mutiny, and he spoke us fair.

" I wouldn't talk like that, boys," he said, " where you can be heard. I don't say you're not right. You see, times change. War is different. Weapons are more accurate ; the fire is quicker. Our methods were all right with the old Brown Bess ; but they may not work against the needle-gun and the Snider."

There is the case in a nutshell. As Clarke used to say : " We have not kept up with the procession." In my time—I know nothing of the Army of to-day—we had made very little progress since Blenheim. We were to march upon the enemy in well-dressed lines ; to fire volleys, and trust in God, and to leave the real fighting to the bayonet.

I was a rifleman. I knew quite well that if I got down behind a Martini rifle a line advancing over four, or five hundred yards in the open would lose five or six men before they got within bayonet reach of me.

I believed then, as I do now, that I could train any average man to do the same that I could do. I was convinced that a line of such men could stop the advance of three or four times their number. But every old soldier in the company knew that I was an ass ; and logic is simply thrown away upon any kind of a conservative.

A young sergeant once asked my friend Fred Weaver, who was a brilliant swordsman, if he would teach him the sword exercise. Fred smiled his beautiful baby smile, and said : " Not necessary. You can do it yourself."

" How ? " asked the youngster.

" Stand," said Weaver, " in the silliest position you can invent ; make all the most idiotic cuts and guards you can think of, and there you are."

But, for all that, our sergeants were taught that precious " sword-drill " for years. However, as they had no swords, it did not much matter.

We had an old Jungler named Rosier in our corps, who was chief marker at the butts. One day at Templemore he and I were waiting for the rifle team to come out to practise. We were standing at the 200 yards firing point, when Rosier said : " See that rabbit." I looked and saw a rabbit browsing about right in front of the target. As I looked, Rosier picked

up my rifle, slipped in a cartridge, fired a quick shot, as he stood, and hit the rabbit in the body, killing it instantly. That was a Boer shot—the shot of a huntsman; nice kind of thing for a six-foot scarlet and white soldier taking cover behind a spray of furze.

All this sounds cold-blooded and horrible, I dare say. But, as Shanks said, "If you must shoot, shoot straight." I am not more bloodthirsty than Koko, who "could not kill a blue-bottle." I never in my life shot at a living creature. To shoot at a bird seems to me little less fiendish than to shoot at a baby. "You might as well," said the French poet, "go out shooting cherubim."

But a fighting machine ought to be a fighting machine, and not a circus.

Once in Northwich, after I had left the Army, I was walking in the field, when I met a young man I knew. He had a double-barrel, and was shooting birds. He pointed out to me a robin, chirping on a tree, and offered me the gun to kill it.

I said I did not murder robins.

"Oh," said he, "you are afraid of missing."

I smiled. "Put your silver matchbox on that post," said I, "and try me." He said I could not hit it at that distance. Then I fired. Ha! it had been a good matchbox, and must have been worth half-a-sovereign—once.

One of the greatest evils in our Army is snobbery. Officers who are too rich or too aristocratic to learn their duty should be cashiered. When one officer is "ragged" because he is poor, or because he takes his profession seriously, every officer concerned in that ebullition of blackguardism should be cashiered, and the colonel and adjutant should be retired on half-pay. It is no excuse for a colonel to say he does not know. It would be no use a sergeant making such an excuse. He ought to know. I am quite convinced that if I were in command of a regiment there would be no ragging. And I am equally convinced that any officer who was too grand to be a soldier would very soon want to resign his commission.

An excellent thing for the Army would be promotion from the ranks. Get a few good sergeants made officers, and the "gentlemen" will have to wake up, or be left. But the son of a linendraper, or a brewer, or a parson, who has been to a public school and imbibed the public-school accent and the public-school outlook, could not sit down to dinner with a fellow promoted from the ranks. It could not be "done."

Still, the fact remains that the public do not pay thirty

millions a year for an Army with the object of enabling snobs to dine with snobs.

Officers ought to be soldiers. That is what they draw their pay for.

XXI.

TOMMY ATKINS IN LITERATURE.

The charge brought against the military story-teller by civilian critics is, in effect, a charge of exaggeration. Tommy, we are told, is more sober, more moral, and less illiterate than he is painted.

I have cogitated this matter with great cogibundity over many pipes, and I have arrived at the conclusion that, as there is something to be said on both sides, I may as well clear the air and turn an honest penny by trying to say it.

The three best-known figures in English military fiction are Mr. Kipling's Musketeers. These are Mulvaney, an Irish scapegrace, fond of drink, women, fighting, and general wickedness; Ortheris, a Cockney corner-boy, of similar tastes; and Learoyd, a Yorkshire tyke, whose most salient characteristic is his native love of dogs.

These men are all presented as bad characters and good soldiers. Their morals are—however, I will speak of the moral question later.

Now, no writer of soldier tales will pretend that all soldiers are as ill-equipped with sobriety, chastity, and syntax as our "Soldiers Three," and no soldier will pretend that all the men in the ranks are as witty, as eloquent, or as amusing as Mr. Kipling's heroes.

But the military novelist has to approach his subject with the selective eye of the artist. There are in all regiments many sober, well-conducted, well-spoken soldiers; but these men, although often the best of fighting material, are not as writing material of much account.

Mulvaney, though not respectable, is picturesque; Ortheris is illiterate, but he is amusing. Tales about teetotal Tommies who spend their evenings in the reading-room and never do anything wicked or wild or funny might be flattering to the Army, but they would be dull. The white hen that never lays away is an admirable fowl, but does not appeal to the writer of humorous sketches or tales of adventure. The artist instinctively selects the black and draggled bird of predatory and combative habits, whose escapades and follies are rich in "copy."

Messrs. Athos, Porthos, and Aramis are not strictly proper persons, but they are very precious to us all. Dogberry is not lucid, nor Falstaff moral; Nym, Bardolph, and Pistol were spongy knaves and swaggerers; Sancho Panza was an ignorant clown, and Panurge a bad lot; but we laugh at these naughty varlets, we laugh with them; we love them all.

Had Kipling presented Mulvaney as a portrait of the average soldier of to-day there would be cause for some demur. But he nowhere makes any such claim for Terence. Indeed, if I remember rightly, he expressly introduces his three pets as the greatest scapegraces in the corps.

The question to be asked, therefore, is not whether all soldiers are like these, but whether any soldiers are like these. If there be any or many men in the ranks of the Ortheris or Mulvaney type, then Mr. Kipling is justified in the sight of men, for it is his inalienable right as an artist to select any types he may consider best suited to his purpose.

In the matter of the King's English, Mr. Kipling is, I think, less defensible; and this because, among all the Kipling soldiers I can remember, there is not one whose speech is not illiterate. Take the "Barrack Room Ballads" as an example. In these the soldiers speak a dialect composed of barrack slang and costermonger's English.

Barrack slang is used in the ranks, and many soldiers are drawn from the illiterate classes of London; but I think that, as a rule, soldiers speak more correctly than civilians of their own rank in life, the tendency of barrack life being to assimilate all dialects and slightly to amend the level of merit in grammar and pronunciation—the amendment being due partly to travel and experience, and partly to the example of educated officers. So that when Kipling makes nearly all his soldiers speak in this patois :

“We aren't no thin red 'eroes, and we aren't no blackguards, too,”

I think he is fairly open to the charge of offering comic caricature as humorous portrait-painting.

Until quite recently the soldier of fiction was a good deal of a fancy sketch, for we cannot accept the men of Lever and John Strange Winter as truthful drawings. But we must not suppose, therefore, that no real or masterly pictures of soldiers and soldiering had appeared prior to the advent of the wonderfully wrought cameos of Jakin and Lew in "The Drums of the Fore and Aft." Kipling's men are powerfully and smartly done, yet I doubt if any of Kipling's Tommies were as humorous or as faithful a type of the genuine

British infantryman as the immortal Corporal Trim. By the way, Trim's name certainly was not Joseph.

In "Tom Jones," "Barry Lyndon," and "Vanity Fair," as in the war books of Erckmann and Chatrian, we have fine work. I have known the counterparts of many of these masterpieces, and have soldiered with them. Corporal Trim is an old friend of mine. I could find him in any line regiment of the British Army to-day. And I knew and loved Mrs. Peggy O'Dowd, and was nursed by her in South Wales; and for Denis, and Rawdon Crawley, and Corporal Brock, and Dickens's Doctor Slammer, they are still extant, I warrant you. Ortheris, I have met also, and Learoyd was in my company in the Ramchunders; but for Private Mulvaney, look you, I hold him an exaggeration.

Mr. Kipling's knowledge of the soldier was not gained from life in barracks, and is therefore sometimes at fault. His scheme of barrack life appears to exclude the non-commissioned officer. In no regiment would the sergeants and corporals have allowed such an excess of latitude as that enjoyed by the "Soldiers Three." Neither within my experience were soldiers Jingoed or braggarts, nor did they revel in bloodshed. The real Tommy is reticent, unaffected, almost cynical. There is a good deal of the music-hall artist about Ortheris and Mulvaney.

The South African War has revealed to us something of the real Tommy. He stands before us a very human and a very British soldier; brave, humorous, patient, often chivalrous, and invincibly cheerful. He is no boaster, no cut-throat, but just the trained, battle-stained, first-class fighting man who does not funk, who does not crow, who does not hate, who goes about his fighting, as about any other work, without fuss and without ill-humour.

Here is the testimony of Captain L. March Phillips, as given in his interesting book, "With Rimmington":

What I think about our soldiers' courage is that it is of such a sort that it takes very little out of them. One of the foreign officers on Lord Roberts's staff has written that the English infantry, more than any he knows, has the knack of fighting and marching and keeping on at it day after day without getting stale or suffering from reaction. The fact is our Tommies go into a fight with much the same indifferent good-humour that they do everything else with. Towards the end of each day's march the soldiers all begin to look out for firewood, and if at that time you knock up against the enemy you may see our infantry advancing to the attack with big logs

tied to their backs and sticking up over their heads. Though it encumbers and bothers them and makes them much more conspicuous, not a Tommy will abandon his wood. Supper is a reality. The thought of being shot does not bother him. Men who fight like this can fight every day.

Another useful book is "The Epistles of Atkins," compiled from actual letters sent home by soldiers at the front. Here we have examples of Tommy's many moods, and may gauge the nature of his humour, his sentiment, and his syntax.

Let us take a few examples of our men's wit, strength, and imagination.

One of the Black Watch, describing Magersfontein, says: "Hell opened on us." Another soldier, speaking of the attempt to recapture the guns at Colenso, says: "You might as well have tried to take a gentleman's honour from him." Another, looking at himself in the lid of his mess-tin, says: "I tell you, I do look a fair stage villain." Another says: "We are like mountain brigands, or rather like a regiment of Rip Van Winkles." A man shot in the knee says: "It knocked me for six." Two brothers are seeking each other after a battle. The elder relates: "At last I saw the young devil, as whole as I was, but white as the dawn." There is no "thin red 'eroes" about that. It is good English, and graphic, too.

Tommy's wit and humour are unquenchable. One man from Ladysmith says: "We ate three regiments of cavalry." Another, being asked during the siege if he can take part in a concert, replies: "No; I can play the bones, but I've eaten them." An artilleryman, shot through the helmet, cries: "Outer!" A man under fire darts from cover to cover and calls out to a comrade: "I'm expecting it every minute, as the song says." One poor boy is hit three times in quick succession. He observes that "The Boers must have taken me for a running man." A Boer throws down his rifle, and cries out: "Don't shoot me, I'm a field-cornet." "I don't care," says Tommy, "if you're a brass band. Hands up!"

And here is a curious experience of my own, with the real Tommy Atkins as he lives:

Some of us one night picked up a little wounded Lancashire soldier, penniless and houseless in London, and set him on his way to camp again. I asked him how he felt when he first went under fire. He answered simply: "Well, I was feared."

Yet this same man who was "feared" was afterwards shot through the shoulder through exposing himself to save a friend. And when I remarked: "That was hard lines for you,"

the splendid little gentleman replied : " No ; he'd have been killed. Besides, he had five kids, and I've only two. So it's as well as it is."

The bullet had touched his lung, and his right arm was paralysed ; and he had to get his living. But he made no complaint. He had only two children, and the man he saved had five ; so it was " as well as it was."

And I mean to say that the little Lancashire reserve man was as fine a gentleman as Sir Philip Sidney.

In my regiment was a man who had been through the Abyssinian campaign. I asked him what he thought of the country and how he fared in the war. He looked scornfully, and gave me the following answer : " It's a beast of a country, all hills and no water. And it was a beastly war. The roads were bad, the grub was bad, and you had to pay a ' bob ' for a plug of tobacco, and then it was so green that when you lit it it stunk the tent out."

One night, in a Strand bar, I was speaking to a commissioner who had lost his right hand. I asked him where he lost his hand. He smiled, took up his glass, said, " Oh, coming back from Maiwand," drank, nodded his head, and departed.

That was all he had to say about the terrible disaster at Maiwand, where he was one of the gallant artillerymen who saved the guns.

His gun, as I learned later, had been surrounded by Afghan cavalry, and his hand had been slashed off at a blow. And that is how he alluded to that desperate affair. " Oh, coming back from Maiwand," as though I had asked him where he got his coat splashed and he had answered, " Oh, coming along from Charing Cross."

What can a mere novelist do with such men as these ?

XXII.

A CHAPTER OF TOMMIES.

" Can you read Latin ? " an eccentric doctor asked me in South Wales.

" No, sir."

" That's a pity," said the doctor. " I'm writing a book, and I wanted someone to read the manuscript and copy it for me. There's a good deal of Latin in it, and I write a frantic fist. I wish you could have helped me, sergeant ; I think you'd be interested ; it is a work on tumours."

I did not know one word of Latin, but I knew a man who did—a private. I will call him Cherry. He was tall, good-

looking, graceful, amiable, and clever. He had been studying for medicine before he came to us. I don't know why he came to us. That is one of the things Tommy seldom tells. Of course, there was the case of Merston; but that, as Kipling says, is another story.

Cherry was a good shot and a good cricketer; he was one of those rare players who cut by instinct. When Cherry made a late cut the spectators all uttered an admiring "Oh!" When Cherry danced the girls looked pleased. He was really a brilliant and charming young man, and he fulfilled the doctor's highest hopes. And years later I heard that Cherry was discharging coal at Pembroke Dock. How do these bright ones fail?

However, there was none of the "thin red 'eroes" about Cherry. Cherry was an intelligent, educated gentleman.

We had in H Company a man called Willie Leonard. Willie was a big, handsome chap, and came from the cavalry. I never met a quieter, gentler man. He spoke softly, and seldom. He did not swear, nor drink, nor gamble. He was always clean and smart and obliging. We used to mock his slight lisp, and tease him about his mother.

But once, at the battalion sports, some of our fellows who were grooms and horsy persons were trying to win a prize by mounting an Irish pony. They were all thrown. Directly they touched the saddle the pony turned them out. Then one of our jokers, Don Pearce, said to Leonard: "Now, Willie 'enard, you've been a bould dragoon; let's see you try."

Willie smiled, walked to the pony, stroked its nose, blew in its ear, mounted, and sat in the saddle as if it had been an armchair. We were dumbfounded. Willie got the prize.

On one other occasion did Willie astonish us. There was a big bully named Vann, who was a perfect nuisance in I Company. One day he came into H Company to play cards, and he struck a little quiet man named Walters in the face. Leonard was there. He went across to Vann, gave him three heavy blows in the face, took him by the hip and collar, and threw him out of the window on to the parade. The drop was only about a yard, but Vann did not return to ask for an explanation. What was Leonard? We could not guess. He spoke correct English, and he was fond of reading. Why did he come into the Army?

Now, I will say something about my dear friend Whisky Bill. Whisky Bill was one of those men about whom a book could be written. He was Irish, of the Kerry type—the Iberian. These men are of middle height, very swarthy, with black hair and eyes, bold, hooked, aquiline noses, heavy

black brows, and long, drooping black moustaches of the Mongolian pattern. You may see hundreds of them in Kerry, all as like each other as twin brothers.

William was a mystery. Everybody liked him ; everybody respected him. Yet he was gloomy, sarcastic, reserved, and dissipated. He and I and my comrade Joe used to have great arguments about literature. William was a Dickens enthusiast ; his criticism of Major Dobbin and Amelia in "Vanity Fair," fired into us one day when we were praising Thackeray, was scathing and polished ; but not fit for publication. William had the literary instinct ; he talked like a book, and like a clever book. But I don't think he had ever been a writer. He was one of those men who can do anything. He could, for instance, mend watches. And he could interest the officers in him. The officers spent a few pounds on a watchmending outfit for William, so that he might mend watches for the men. And William went out and sold the outfit and came home blind in a cart, and did his watchmending with a penknife, a quill pen, and a fork. He was not called Whisky Bill for nothing.

"The man," said William, "who does not thank his Maker for a glass of old Jameson, mixed with hot water, one lump of sugar, and the slightest suspicion of lemon, ought to be buried at a cross-road at the public expense."

William was one of the cleanest soldiers in the regiment, and one of the best—when he was sober ; and the colonel let him off time after time at orderly-room. The colonel liked him. He was a superior person.

In Cardiff William excelled himself. William's brother turned up, from Mexico, or Tibet, or one of those places which men of William's family would be likely to visit. William's brother had the family gift. They went out, the two brothers, and were not seen nor heard of for three days. Then a note came to my friend Joe. It was from the brother. The brother was at an inn in Cardiff, and could not come out. He had spent all his money, and William had sold his boots.

Next day the wreck of William appeared before the colonel. The colonel was a soldier. He stroked his white moustache, shut one eye, and looked at Whisky Bill with the other.

"What have you to say this time ?" asked the colonel.

"Nothing, sir," said William.

"I'm ashamed of you," said the colonel. "I don't know why I did not try you by court-martial last month. You'll die in a ditch. Go. Admonished."

Then William came up to his room, whistled an air from "Traviata" (he could whistle like a flute), opened his kit-bag, produced a bottle of sherry, poured the contents into a basin,

and drank it like a cup of tea. "Heavens!" said William. "I began to think I was a corpse. Will any soldier lend me a draw at his pipe?"

Where did William come from? Why did he come? What was he?

There was my friend Fred. He joined with me, in '71. He had blue eyes, a complexion like a girl, a flaxen moustache, and the smile of a baby. He made puns. He made verses. He made jokes. He became a great gymnast, and a great swordsman. He and Joe and I were all sergeants together, and were inseparables. We made a comic opera, painted the scenery, and played it before the detachment. Fred wrote the bill, which was fixed up on the ramparts of the fort. It ran:

The comic opera of "King Coffee" will be performed to-night: D.V.

If D does not V it will be postponed till Saturday.

Once Fred and I were in London. We went to the theatre, and between the acts we went to the bar and had lemonade and ices. We were both abstainers.

The proud and beautiful aristocrat who served the ices would not take our money. She looked at Fred, and Fred smiled; and she said: "I cannot take your money."

Fred did not argue, he was too delicate to blunder so; but he went to a girl who was selling roses, bought some, and took them to the bar.

Then we went back to camp, and on our way called at a big hotel, and asked for lemonade. They did not want us there; and the waitress said: "We have no lemonade." Thereupon Fred's blue eyes sparkled, and he smiled that baby smile; and, said he: "Have you any champagne, miss?"

"Yes," said the Hebe, "we have champagne."

"Thank you," said Fred sweetly. "We don't want any, but it's a useful thing to have in the house. Good-evening."

Our big drummer was a great boxer. His name was Jim Stocks. He had grey, keen eyes, a pleasant face, a square jaw, a pugilist's smile, and a figure like Jem Mace, who had a figure like Adonis.

Jim was the best-tempered man in the world—when he was "teetotal." But if you gave him a few drinks and threw a policeman at him, James was translated. That was why James got sent to prison for beating six constables on a bridge in Wales.

One day Jim asked me to box with him. I said I could not box. He said: "Never mind; put on the mittens." I said I would box if he would not hit hard. He said: "Granted;

but don't you hit hard, either." I smiled. James smiled. Then we boxed; that is, he boxed. For ten minutes I stood up while Jim stroked me on the cheek, patted me on the ribs, touched me tenderly on the eyes, the nose, and the mouth; and all the while I never got near him. Then I began to get excited. I thought to myself: "James, I will land you one." And I took what looked like an opening, and I dashed in, and—then I was sitting down at the other side of the room, and Jim was laughing.

"How did you do that?" said I.

"I saw you coming," said Jim. "You had one foot off the floor, so I touched you on the chest. See?"

"Dear, dear, dear," said E. T. Parker, "we are born in sin, and there is none righteous among us. Would you believe it, that thrice—farmer, down by the Pender brook, has turned a devilish unregenerate bull loose in the meadow where I go to catch his roach? I give you my word, Blatchford, that I despair of the human race. The infuriated, indiscriminating bovine beast drove me into the water. I stood there half an hour till that beer-barrel of a man, Frank Sunderland, came along and saved my life. I'll tell you what, Blatchford, I'll see that bucolic, mangel-merchant hanged before I set foot in his field again!"

Who was E. T. Parker? He was a private of E Company—scholar, actor, mimic, jester, gentleman, and soldier. We called him "old" Parker. He was possibly thirty-nine or forty. His brother, so I heard, was a member of Parliament for a Yorkshire town.

These were some of the privates in the Ramchunders. There were others. But wait till we come to the Queen's Bad Bargains.

I mentioned just now a man called Merston. This man was not in our regiment. I met him when the reserves were called out in '78. You may remember that there was at that time talk of a war with Russia. And that reminds me. Let Merston wait again; he won't mind—he died twenty years ago.

As bearing on the question of Tommy Atkins's jingoism, I will say a few words about the men who in 1878 were expecting to be sent to fight the Russians.

We did not know but that we might have to start any day. And I used to talk to the men about it. They came from many regiments, being reserve men. Nobody wanted to go; nobody expressed any serious reluctance to go. I think the general feeling was almost a feeling of indifference. Soldiers are not easily excited, except about such important matters as pay, rations, and tobacco.

"They'll eat us up; they'll wipe us out. There's such a lot of 'em." That was what I heard from many a Tommy, as he sat cleaning his traps or smoking his pipe. But there was not a man eager to "get at them," nor a man seriously concerned about his chances.

The bandmaster of the corps to which we were attached was a Greek, who had been much in Russia. He used to shake his head and commiserate us. "Ah, poor fellows, poor fellows!" he would say. "You don't know to what you are sent. The Tsar, he has a million of men. You will be decimated. Not one of you that go will ever come back again. Poor fellows!"

Corporal Derille, from the 13th Light Infantry, was with me one day when the bandmaster was deploring our fate. He laughed, shrugged his shoulders, said: "Well, don't make a song about it. Who's coming out for a swim?" And turned upon his heel.

There was one thing we felt rather annoyed about. All the reserve men in our division had turned up save one. We were vexed with that absentee. He spoiled the record. We wondered who he was; what was his name; where he had gone to? And we wrote him down a fraud.

And then he came. In the middle of the night there was a noise in our room, and we woke up one by one. Then in the darkness I heard a strange voice shouting: "Hello! 96th! Rouse about, men! Here's your old Jim Bryan. Here's Jim Bryan of the Borderers back from Texas, bless your souls! Why don't you fall in the company? Hi! Hello! Here's Jim Bryan of the First Class Reserve, all the way from Texas, and gaspin' for a drink!"

Then we woke up and cheered Jim Bryan of the Borderers, who had come all the way from Texas, and had made our record complete. I struck a match and inspected James. He was a big man in a pea-jacket and sailor's cloth trousers, low top-boots, and a wideawake hat. I shook hands with him, and, as the match went out, and as I fell asleep, I heard him saying: "Bully for you, sergeant. I've had the devil's own journey! And the canteen's closed; and, oh, my sainted Aunt Martha, couldn't I make a wreck of a pint of ale!"

Well, here, at last, is Merston's story, he being one of the few men who ever told me why he entered the Army. This he told me on the hospital guard at Chester; and how he came to tell me was that we had that night rescued a little Welsh girl, who was starving in the streets. And that is another story.

Merston spoke bitterly of the sex. I protested. Then he told me his story.

"All right, sergeant. But not for me. I was mad about one girl. Well, here I am. My God, how they can deceive you! How they can lie! Look here: let me tell you about her. She was quite a lady; she was an artist and a designer. I was—well, I was doing all right; I should have done all right. And we were engaged. And I—you know, I worshipped her. I thought she was *the* woman. Then I—I fell out of my balloon. See? Here I am, Private Merston of G Company.

"Well, we were engaged. And one day I was in my own father's office. I worked for the gov'nor. Never mind that. I was in the office, and two men who had come in on business, and who were waiting for the gov'nor, got talking. I heard them through the screen. One of them was a scoundrel named—never mind his name. They were talking, and I heard her name. Hers!

"The man I didn't know said: 'Yes; she's a very pretty girl, and I believe she's quite honest.'

"Then the man I did know laughed.

"'Why,' said his friend, 'is there anything against her?'

"'No,' said the other man—the scoundrel!—'nothing against her; but she's my mistress.'

"I jumped up, and was going to rush into the other compartment, and—well, I don't know what I meant to do; but just then father came to the door of his private room and spoke to that scoundrel, and I put my hat on and went out.

"Of course, I didn't quite believe it. But I was frantic. I went to look for her. But then I went to see my pal. He was a good chap, with a lot more sense than I had. I went to ask him about it—what I should do, what he thought?

"Then he—he said he knew. He had met her with that man months before, at Scarborough, where she was living with him as his wife.

"So I—so I—well, here I am, sergeant. That's *why*. See?"

"But was your friend sure?" I asked.

"Sure? I followed her to the theatre. I saw her come out with him and drive away. I took a hansom and followed. They drove to his rooms, and went in. I sent my cab away, and I walked about and watched the door all night. She never came out. At six o'clock I went away, packed up a few things, got a train for London, and—now I'm on guard, sergeant, Merston, of G Company."

What can one say to a man when he tells such a tale as that? I gave Merston a drink and a cigar, and I went and looked at my "prisoner." She was asleep on the plank bed of the cell,

rolled up in a great watch-coat. Her face was as peaceful as a child's. There was a smile on her lips. Her little brown hand was curled up under her plump, brown cheek. There were some scraps of withered leaves among her black curls. She had slept for some nights in the fields. I looked at the poor child for a while, and I could see no evil in her face. I went back to Merston, and we smoked and looked into the fire.

The girl: I found her people, and she did well.

Merston died of enteric in Egypt.

XXIII.

A CHAPTER OF SERGEANTS.

The sergeant is a soldier, and the private is a soldier; but there is a difference between them beyond the difference of pay, position, responsibility, and dress. The sergeant might belong to a different race.

The private is easy to describe, the sergeant is not easy. Perhaps that is why there are so few lifelike portraits of sergeants in literature.

The keynote to the nature of that curious product of environment, the British sergeant, is contained in the one word: responsibility. The sergeants are the most responsible men in the Army.

Company officers have very little responsibility. The captain is nominally responsible for his company, but the colour-sergeant and the sergeants are really responsible. They are responsible to the officers, to the sergeant-major, to the men. If the men are insubordinate, untidy, lazy, the sergeants are held answerable. If the room is dirty, or the kits ill-laid out, or the men not out of bed in time, the sergeant is held accountable. The sergeants call the roll, keep the accounts, command the guards and pickets, parade the duties, keep the roster of fatigues, inspect the companies, march the companies on parade, attend to the rations, the clothing, the washing, the ammunition.

There are something like a hundred or a hundred and twenty men in a company. The sergeants of the company must know the men, must know their regimental numbers, the numbers of their arms, the numbers of their accoutrements; must know where every man is, and what he is doing. The sergeant must be able to call the roll of the company in the dark, to account for every man not present.

The alarm sounds in the night. The sergeants are in bed and

asleep, but they must be first on parade. Then the orderly-sergeant calls the roll, by memory. Thus: "Austin."—"Here." "Barnes."—"Here." "Brady." No answer. The sergeant knows—Brady is on guard. So the roll goes on. There are two men absent, one in hospital, three on guard, one on leave; the sergeant knows all about them. His company consists of five sergeants and sixty file. He has on parade four sergeants and fifty-two file. Two men are absent, the rest on duty. The captain comes on parade. The sergeant reports: "F Company, two men absent, sir." "Names?" says the captain. "Stubbins and Green, sir."

Then the adjutant takes the reports from the captains. But the captain only knows what the sergeant tells him. He does not know how many men ought to be on parade, nor where the absentees are, nor who they are. He holds the sergeant responsible for all that.

I am out at drill, teaching musketry to a squad of recruits. The captain inspects the barrack-rooms. A man has gone on guard and left a clothes-brush on his cot. The captain asks who is in charge of the room. "Sergeant Blatchford, sir." The captain sends for me. "How is it that there is a brush left on a cot in your room? Don't let it occur again."

There is no answer; no excuse. The sergeant is responsible. If he does his duty it will be impossible for any man to leave a brush on his cot. That is the idea.

Now, apply that idea to a ragging case, and you will see why I say a colonel is responsible whether he knows about it or not. If it were a ragging case in a barrack-room the sergeant would not be excused because he did not know.

I was once placed under arrest for not being in two places at once. I was sergeant on canteen duty. The sergeant on canteen duty had to attend parade. The battalion went route marching. The canteen was opened at 1 p.m., and the sergeant was due there at one. At two o'clock we returned from route marching. I sent the corporal to the canteen, and ran to change my dress and get a clean pair of boots on. At ten minutes past two the major met me going to the canteen, and placed me under arrest for being absent from duty. If I had gone to the canteen just as I came from parade, I should have been arrested by the sergeant-major for being dirty.

When I went in front of the colonel he asked me what I had to say. I said, "Nothing, sir." The colonel lectured me, and sent me away. I think he said I was not to do it again, and I sincerely hoped I should not. But one never knows.

The sergeants are responsible for discipline. A sergeant is on duty night or day, asleep or awake ; every day ; always.

The sergeant must not request ; he must command. I saw a sergeant arrested for saying to a private, with whom he was on quite friendly terms : " Jack, will you loop that tent up ? " The sergeant-major heard it, and arrested him. He had a narrow escape of a court-martial. He ought to have said : " Jones, loop up the tent."

The sergeants must watch the men on parade, check them, keep them up to their work. They must stop all brawling or improper conduct. They must see the lights out at the proper time and the windows open at the proper time. They must control a dozen or twenty men without noise or fuss or threats.

A sergeant in the British Army must not threaten a man. He must not say : " I will put you in the guard-room." He must do it or not do it. He must not touch a man. If he struck a private or a corporal he would lose his stripes.

No British officer ever touches a soldier.

In some Continental armies the officers and non-commissioned officers strike and kick the privates. But in our Army that would mean ruin to the assailant.

A sergeant must have the respect as well as the obedience of the men if he is to get real discipline and smartness. He must make no favourites, and must be quite fearless.

A sergeant spends most of his waking life in giving, or taking, or executing orders. He must be always smart, and clean, and ready. He must know his own work, and the private's work, and the officer's work.

Such being the case, it becomes evident that a sergeant will very soon evolve into a soldier of a special type ; a soldier as unlike the private as he is unlike the officer.

There is a row in I Company, over the heads of H. A drummer-boy runs down and comes to me.

" Sergeant, the men in No. 3 room of I Company are murdering one another."

Very good. I ask no questions. I conclude there is no sergeant upstairs, or the drummer would not have come to another company. I run upstairs. There are some ten or twelve men fighting like dogs in the middle of the room. One man lies unconscious in the fender, with blood on his face. Plates, basins, forms, and trestles are overturned.

I stand at the door and shout. No use. I look around. I see a mop in a bucket of water. I seize the mop, charge into the mêlée, and make a ring. The men are drunk, and half mad. For a moment they do not know me. Then I speak. I speak as only a sergeant can speak. I get silence. But it

is a near thing. If I had been an unpopular sergeant some of the men would have pretended not to know me, and I should have had a rough time. These chaps are furious, and they fear nothing. But discipline is ingrained in their blood. The steady, firm, "Halt! What's this? Who is in charge of this room?" pulls them up. It is all over; they separate; they apologise; and they wait to see what is to happen to them. Will they be sent to the guard-room or not? I say: "Clear this mess up. Look to that man. Martin, go and find the orderly-sergeant of I Company."

Half an hour later I meet some of these men, half-washed, with bruised faces, and spots of blood on their jackets, going off for a walk in town. I do not interfere. They are drunk, and they would be a disgrace to the regiment if they got out in town. But they will not. There is the sergeant of the guard; there is the sergeant on gate duty. Sergeants again; *toujours* sergeants.

That is a brief sketch of an actual incident. It is only fair to say that it happened at Christmas-time.

On the night of my twenty-first birthday, I being then a young lance-corporal, I was told that a man named Kelly meant to murder me with a life-preserver. I was alone in a casemated barrack-room when Kelly paid his call. I stood at one end of the long table, cleaning my traps. The rifle and bayonet lay close to my hand on the table.

Kelly came in with one hand behind his back. He was a savage and morose man, and he had been drinking.

"Good-evening, corporal," he said, and began to sidle along by the table. I took up the bayonet and slipped it on to the rifle.

"Halt there, Kelly!" said I. "What have you got in your hand?"

"Nothing, corporal," was the reply.

"Put it on the table," I said.

He crept a bit nearer. Then I lifted the rifle, with the bayonet fixed, and went to meet him. When I was within reach, I said very quietly:

"If you do not put that thing on the table, I will put the bayonet into you!"

We looked at each other for a little while. Then he laid the life-preserver on the table.

"Right about turn," said I. He obeyed. "Quick march." He marched.

I followed in my shirtsleeves, with the rifle in my hand, and I marched him across to the guard-room, and he was made a prisoner. Had I put the facts against him he would have gone to prison for two years. But I only put the charge

of "drunk in barracks," and he got off with three days' pack drill.

The next day he came and thanked me. After that I could have depended on him in any emergency.

Of course, that is a corporal story, but it contains a suggestion of the kind of thing from which the sergeant is evolved.

And while I am with the corporals I may as well tell a little story about my favourite corporal, Jack Amies, or, as we called him, "Happy Jack," for this is a sergeant's story, too.

Jack was on detachment with G Company at Freshwater. The colour-sergeant, Coleman, a fine old "buff-stick," was drilling the company, and had kept them longer than usual. Happy Jack smiled when an inattentive man made a mistake, and Coleman at once pounced upon him. "*Now* then, Corporal Amies," he said, "if you think you are so smart, just come out here and drill the company. Do you hear?"

Happy Jack marched out, squared his shoulders, put on a look of importance, and proceeded to drill the company.

"G Company. 'Shon! Shallo-humps! Right turn! Dismiss!" And Jack was halfway down the hill, and the men after him, before the astonished "flag" could realise the impudent trick he had played.

Coleman sent for Amies and began to address him with great sternness; but no one could be stern with Happy Jack, and Coleman had begun to see the joke himself, so he contented himself with a grim smile, and a hint that Corporal Amies should read up company drill in the drill-book and endeavour for the future not to be so funny.

When Jack told me the story he laughed till he wept. "By gum," he said, "it was touch-and-go! I could feel the stripes shaking on my arms. But I'd done it before I knew. And if I'd had to be shot I must have laughed. If you'd seen the 'flag's' face when we mizzled! Oh, my poor family; why was I born a goat?" Now, Jack was with me when I arrested the Black M.P.'s. But that comes later.

Responsibility, action, and command make the sergeant what he is. They make him prompt, firm, self-reliant, and more or less masterful. They give him decision, will-power, self-control. They stamp upon his features a look of authority, of sternness often. He has a searching glance, a firm step, a rather proud carriage. He is a man who knows his duty, and does it. He would make very short work of Messrs. Ortheris and Mulvaney. The officers and the sergeant-major will allow him not an inch of latitude, and he in his turn will stand no nonsense. The company must soldier or the company will hear things.

"Look alive, that sergeant; are you going to dress the company or not?" yells the sergeant-major.

"Dress *back*, Branningan," shouts the sergeant. "Dress *back*. Up in the centre. Eyes *front*."

"Who's in charge of this room?" demands the major. "My God, there's a cot a quarter of an inch out of the alignment! Where's the sergeant of the room?"

"On guard, sir."

"The corporal?"

"On fatigue, sir."

"Who is orderly sergeant?"

"I am, sir."

"Very well. Look at that cot. Why don't you see the cots dressed?"

The orderly sergeant, who has just run back from parade, where he has been answering the third bugle-call in the last five minutes, orders Private Jagers to dress his cot up, and puts his name down.

"Colour-sergeant," says the captain angrily, "the men are running out of ammunition."

"Coming, sir."

"It ought to be *here*. We shall be out of action. *Where the devil* is the orderly sergeant?"

The orderly sergeant is running as fast as he can across a swampy ground with 500 blank cartridges, which he has had to fetch from a foundered tumbril a thousand yards in the rear of the firing line. The captain, sitting on a cushion of heather, calls out, "Hurry up, there; hurry up, sergeant."

Sergeant! It is always sergeant. If you took the sergeants out of a battalion it would be like a dog without his backbone.

But if a sergeant does get a commission it is as a quartermaster, not as a combatant officer. Imagine young Billkins, the son of the village lawyer, sitting down to dinner with "one of those fellows"!

Also, if you feel imaginative, you may imagine young Billkins commanding the company in a battle after the sergeants are all put out of action.

XXIV.

ANOTHER CHAPTER OF SERGEANTS.

Among sergeants the variety of types is very great. There are sergeants educated and sergeants illiterate; there are steady sergeants and wild sergeants; there are clever sergeants and stupid sergeants; there are sergeants kindly and severe.

For instance, there were Sergeants Mick, Walter, and

Charles. As these are real men, and, I hope, alive, I will simply call them by their Christian names.

Sergeant Mick was an Irish soldier of the old type. He wasn't mad, but he was terribly Irish. At Balaclava, Mick, then a young private, volunteered to fetch in a wounded officer under fire. As Mick stooped to pick up the officer a bullet hit him in the neck. Mick got the officer on his back and started for home. The bullets whistled round him, his own blood streamed all over him, and the poor officer, who was delirious, tried to pull his deliverer's hair out.

Twenty years later, Mick, who had been for about the tenth time reduced to the ranks, was on sentry at Spike Island. A gentleman, entering the prison, passed his post and stopped to speak to him. He asked his name, and where he got his Distinguished Service medal. Then he said :

"You brought an officer off the field at Balaclava ?"

"I did, sorr."

"What regiment did he belong to ?"

"The artillery, sorr."

"What rank was he ?"

"Lieutenant, sorr."

"Well, Mick," said the officer, "I am the man."

When Mick came off sentry the officer had a chat with him, and, finding he was shortly leaving the Service, said if he would like to be a prison warder he could get him a post. Then he asked :

"Do you drink ?"

"I do, sorr, sometimes take a little drop," said Mick.

The ex-officer, now an inspector of prisons, smiled. "I see," he said ; "and they are very strict about drink. However," he added, with a smile, "as fast as they fire you out of one billet I will fire you into another." And I hope he did. Mick would keep him busy.

Mick when I knew him well must have been five-and-forty; and his hair was going grey. But he had a complexion like a ripe apple, and was as nimble as a boy ; also he was as amorous. Nobody ever knew Sergeant Mick without a sweetheart. And he used to write love-letters in the barrack-room, repeating all the words aloud, to the great joy of the youngsters, and referring repeatedly to the dictionary for the spelling.

"My dear Annie (how many 'n's' in Annie ?),—'Tis the long days they are (divil fly off wid this pen), 'tis the long days they are since I left you at Mount Wise—(No ; be Jasus, that was the other one)—and ye gave me the cigar-case (tare an 'ouns ! do they spell it wid a 'c' ?), which has never left me since." Cry of "Liar !" from the corporal of

the room. Such was Mick's artless method of correspondence.

Mick was famous as the sergeant who reported himself absent. He was then a lance-sergeant. A lance-sergeant ranked as corporal, and was counted in the "rank and file." Mick knew that he should have three sergeants and fifty rank and file on parade. He called the roll. Every name was answered to. He numbered the company, he had a blank file—one man short.

The bugle sounded for orderly sergeants. Mick fell in with the rest, and reported "One man absent; sorr."

"Who is it?" asked the sergeant-major.

"I don't know, sorr."

"Don't know! Don't know, sergeant! Go and find out."

Mick ran back, counted his men, called the roll. One man short.

"Come along there, double up," shouted the "major."

Mick reported one man absent.

"Name," said the "major," glaring, and standing on his toes.

"I dunno, sorr."

"What the devil do you mean?" cried the "major."

"Are you drunk?"

Then Mick suddenly remembered that he had not counted himself. Instantly his face lighted up.

"Well," said the "major," fiercely, "have you arrived? Who is it?"

"Be jabbers," said Mick, "'tis meself, sorr."

The sergeant-major turned purple and his eyes nearly started out of his head.

"What the devil is the matter with this sergeant?" he said. "Colour-Sergeant Cox, what is this sergeant talking about?"

Colour-Sergeant Cox, who was as sharp as a thorn and as cool as a cucumber, glanced at the company, glanced at Mick's cotton stripes, and said in his sharp, staccato way:

"Hey! Blank file? Lance-sergeant! What? That's it, sir. He had forgotten to count himself in the rank and file."

"By the Lord's thumb," said the "major," "I wonder he didn't forget to march himself on parade."

But one Sunday Mick knocked the "major" again by reporting: "Church of England all present, sorr; and the Roman Catholics in me hat."

"Well, I *am* ——!" said the "major." "I often wondered what you had in your hat."

Mick was sergeant many times, but he could not keep his stripes. Once in Devonport I was on parade when he was reduced. He had been sent out on duty to the Governor's house, had met his very best girl, and forgotten the Governor. He came back, poor old Mick, in a hansom-cab with a policeman's helmet on his head, which he had taken from a constable, and a large accordion, which he had captured from an Italian. He was put under arrest, and lost his stripes.

And on parade, when the sentence was read out, there was a note from the general saying that he confirmed the sentence, but that he wished the regiment to remember that Lance-Sergeant Mick was affected by an old wound, got in the gallant discharge of his duty in the field.

And after the stripes were cut off and the battalion had been dismissed, the men cheered old Mick, and the sergeants surrounded him and shook him by the hand; and the captain of his company told the colour-sergeant to give him the first chance of a lance-corporal's stripe.

But Mick would take the stripe no more.

"'Tis the thirsty soldier I am," he said, "and the stripes will not stick to me for the wet I take."

Colour-sergeant Walter was another type. He was handsome, he was genial, he was charming. A fine soldier, a splendid shot, an excellent penman; possessed of high intelligence, an amiable nature, and the finest manners, it was little wonder that he had the good will of the whole corps. He got a commission, too, in time. But, of course, only as a quartermaster. This fine soldier and true gentleman was not good enough to dine with Lieutenant Noodle and Sub-Lieutenant Boodle. Besides, how can a lieutenant live on his pay?

Walter on one occasion when I and another young corporal had got disgusted with the petty tyranny of an officer, and wanted to give up our stripes, took us into his little pay-room and talked to us. He said: "You'll never make sergeants if you can't stand the grin as corporals. Pull yourselves together, and let the captain see your mettle. Besides, it's cowardly to give up a stripe. Play the game. See it out. Make up your minds that you'll hold your stripes, and that nobody shall take them off you."

We took his advice. And a month later the captain exchanged into another corps, and we were both made lance-sergeants.

That night he took us to the sergeants' mess, and was very good to us. And later he came in from a ball, where he had had some wine, and woke me up to talk to me. For an hour or more he sat and talked, and I realised what a kindly,

frank, and cultured gentleman he was. As my friend Joe said: "When Walter is on deck he's the nicest chap in the battalion, but when he has had a drink he's irresistible."

Now Sergeant Charles was a man of an entirely different kind. Charles was not of ours. He was a wild Scotsman, and he belonged to a light infantry regiment.

Charles was a well-groomed, highly educated man, very proud of his appearance, of his white hands, of his public school accent, and of his marvellous command of Rabelaisian language.

I met him first at dinner in the sergeants' mess, where he was our guest. I was charmed with his refined manners and his bright and witty talk, and began to flatter myself that I had found a pearl. Then he turned to me with a smile and asked me if I was fond of Indian curry. I said I was, and then, with the same pleasant smile and in the same cultured voice, my nice new friend uttered a witticism so obscene that I wonder that it did not turn the beef putrid. I was stunned. I made no answer. I got up and left the table.

The next day Charles came to me smiling and affable, apologised very gracefully, and asked with a slight suspicion of irony if I thought there was any serious harm in a little Rabelaisian frankness. But I also had a playful humour, of the Shadbolt kind, and I replied politely that guano was a quite innocent and admirable thing, but not on the breakfast-table.

However, Charles was more careful, at least with one or two of us, and we did not quarrel. Then one day he came and asked me to go with him to a concert in Plymouth, at which Christine Nilsson was singing, and I went. As we were leaving barracks we met a very quiet, steady sergeant of Charles's regiment. This sergeant drew me aside on some pretext and asked me if I were going out with Charles. I told him yes—to a concert. Then he asked me a strange question: "Are you a good runner?" I said I was rather fast for a few hundred yards, and asked why he put such a question; but he only said: "Oh, that's all right, then; see you to-morrow," and left us.

He knew Charles.

We went to the concert and left about ten. Charles was in great form, and chatted to me about music and musicians, and painters and pictures, and colour and form and poetry, and at last, as he was quoting some lines from "Alastor," there came round the corner a policeman.

We walked on until we met the policeman, when Charles stopped and inquired most politely the way to some square, which existed only in his own imagination.

"Don't know any such square as that, not in Plymouth," said the constable.

"Then," said Charles, "allow me to suggest to you, my dear friend, that you are an obfuscated idiot." And with that he suddenly bashed the policeman's helmet over his eyes, gave him a heavy punch in the chest, and ran.

This was one of Charles's favourite jokes. It seemed a good deal funnier the day after. Even then it was funnier to him than to the person who had acted second.

A few weeks after my sprint Charles got into trouble. There was a funny old quartermaster in his regiment, who had been promoted from the ranks. One day this officer came into the office where Charles was supposed to work, and began to talk to the sergeant-major. The talk was about tactics of infantry, and the quartermaster made some remarks about the new order of attack. Then Charles had one of his irrepressible spasms of humour.

"Sir," he said to the old officer, "you ought to be a general on the active list." The quartermaster looked rather surprised, and Charles continued: "Instead of which, you are only a general nuisance!"

"Sergeant Charles," said the quartermaster, "do you know that you are an impertinent fool?"

"Shall I place him under arrest, sir?" asked the sergeant-major.

"No," said the quartermaster. And he went out.

But the sergeant-major followed the officer, and shortly afterwards Charles was placed under arrest. The next morning he was put back for a court-martial.

Now Joe and I felt that Charles was certain to be reduced, and, thinking he would be feeling rather dull, we went round to his quarters in the evening. As we climbed the stairs we heard music and laughter, and, entering the room, found the prisoner dancing the sword dance on the table. One of our bandsmen was playing the clarinet, and the room was full of soldiers, drinking whisky punch out of basins. Charles saluted us with a fusillade of Rabelasian wit, and we retired to disinfect ourselves.

Now it is a curious thing, but I remember no more of Charles. I see him now, flushed and hilarious, dancing on a barrack-room table, as I saw him then. Whether he was or was not reduced, and what became of him later, I do not know.

He was a type of sergeant not so uncommon as one would expect. He was clever and amusing, and could be very agreeable when in the mood. But he was quite unfit for his

position, and behind his wit and affability there was, I'm afraid, a rather repulsive and unprincipled nature.

There was Colour-Sergeant Bailey, of the Rifle Brigade, who would sit up all night playing cards and drinking whisky, and would turn out in the morning and make nine consecutive bull's-eyes at 200 yards.

There was little Colour-Sergeant Wall, of ours, who played whist every evening in the mess, and made a point of "drinking round;" that is, taking a glass of every liquor sold in turn—first a brandy, then a gin, then a rum, then a sherry, and so on. This man was rather a sneak, and was not liked.

Then there was bluff George Parrott, a manly fellow and a born fast bowler; and Cutler, who wrote like copperplate, and was afraid of his wife and the sergeant-major; and Alf. Fidler, a rattling good shot, very steady and sensible, who used to read Cowper's poems and talk learnedly about ferns and flowers; and there was Peter Richardson, known as "wooden gun," whose dry Scots humour on the drill-ground used to be the delight of the recruits; and there was little Tommy Ashton, who wrote like an angel when he had got the pen on the paper, but was so unsteady that he had to guide his right hand with his left. This man's rifle used to wobble about as he aimed, as if he had been conducting an orchestra with it; but for all that, he was a really good shot.

Also, there was the provost-sergeant, Bonass. But he shall wait.

Three of our sergeants—the colour-sergeant of F Company, the bandmaster, and the armourer-sergeant—went out in India to kill a man-eating tiger. They took a luncheon-basket and some liquor, and they had their tiffin under the tree where the tiger was often seen. And they all fell asleep, and slept all night. Fortunately, the tiger did not come to wake them. Rather risky? Yes; but, after all, even a sergeant must have some occasional amusements.

XXV.

A CHAPTER OF OFFICERS.

I have known very few bad officers; I mean very few who were meanly spiteful or brutally tyrannical, and I shall waste no time on those.

Officers should be soldiers. In my time very few of them were soldiers. That was not their fault; it was the fault of the system.

Officers should be trained riflemen; they should also be

practised commanders. In the Army, as I knew it, most of the drill was parade drill. I think that after an officer had been drilled, set up, and taught to shoot, he should be as often as possible employed on work of the kind he would have in the field.

If the various regiments now in quarters at home, instead of spending so much time in regimental drill, were to be occupied in manœuvres, the officers and men would get a better training.

All the while we were stationed in Devonport we never met any other regiment under arms. Yet there was another regiment in the Raglan Barracks with us, and there were several battalions of Marines at Plymouth.

In the winter we used to go out route marching. But it never seemed to occur to those responsible for our efficiency that we might be sent out to attack or defend some position, instead of tramping along the roads, hour after hour, wearing out shoeleather.

We have camps for exercise, certainly—one at Aldershot, one on Salisbury Plain; but it would surely be possible to make every regimental station into a camp of exercise.

For instance, why should not the Guards be sent to attack Dorking or Wimbledon, and the Territorials to defend the position against them?

During the six years I was in the Ramchunders I never saw an officer entrusted with the attack or defence of a position. We youngsters used to wonder why the companies rusting in the forts at Bembridge and Sandown were never sent out to contend against each other.

I would make every private in the Army act as a corporal in his turn. Of the four corporals in a company, two should be permanent, the others should be changed monthly. In the same way, the sergeants should in turn be put in command of the company at field exercise, and the subaltern officers should act in turn as captains. This would make an immense difference in the discipline and efficiency of the Army.

Outpost duty, scouting, signalling, cycling, field fortification should be more generally taught and practised. An army should be a fighting machine, not a toy.

Officers should be treated as sergeants are treated. They should be compelled to learn their business and to do their duty. Privates should be taught to think, and not be treated as children from whom is expected only a blind mechanical obedience.

I believe our Army is more for use and less for show than it used to be; but from what I read and hear there is still a great deal of room for improvement.

When I first joined the regiment I was greatly taken with the officers. I shall never forget the first Sunday at Parkhurst, and the officers walking up the aisle of the church with their swords clanking and the sun shining on the scarlet and gold of their uniforms. Most of them were tall, good-looking men ; and, to my eyes, used to the dirt and ugliness of a northern factory town, they appeared almost superhuman.

And officers generally are fine fellows in spite of their faults ; well set up, well dressed, well groomed, good to look at ; the more pity that so many of them should be good for very little else.

One of the best officers and one of the best soldiers I served with was our colonel. There was no noise, no fuss about him. He knew his work and did it. He never worried the men nor humbugged them in any way. But he could always get his battalion where it was wanted in less time than any other colonel.

When we arrived at Horrabridge for the Dartmoor manœuvres one of the majors had us formed up in line, with points out, and was dressing the line as if for inspection. This after a night cooped up in a train ; this in a lane ankle-deep in mud ; this in the pouring rain, and with a twelve-mile march to the camping-ground before us.

While this foolery was going on the colonel came out of the station and called out : " March the men off, major ; we don't want any of that damned rot here ! "

When we got up to camping-ground, weary, hungry, and wet through, the major rode up to the colonel, and said : " Where shall we picket the horses, sir ? "

" Picket them in hell ! " said the colonel. " Why don't you picket your men ? "

It was a horrid day, and the camping-ground was a spongy moor. The rain fell in sheets ; the tents did not arrive till six in the evening, and we had only had about a pound of dry bread per man during the last twenty-four hours. Then, when the tents were pitched and the rations served out, the cooks could not light the fires. All the officers went into their tents ; and the cooks swore and the men swore, and the rain came down harder than ever.

Then we saw an officer. It was the colonel.

He came out with bare head and bare feet, and a waterproof sheet pinned round his shoulders ; and he brought in one hand a bull's-eye lantern, and in the other a bottle of brandy. And he went to the cooks and lighted the fires for them. He poured some spirits on the wood, and lighted it with the lantern ; and so we got, about eight o'clock, some half-stewed mutton and some bread.

But to see the other officers crawling out to help after the colonel had begun the work was, as Dr. Watts says, "a pleasant sight."

On parade the major would be fooling about with the column. "Sergeant-majah! Correct those intervals between number two and number three. Tut, tut! Nearly a pace short: a pace is a lot in quarter-column. Battalion: shoulder—as you were. There's a man; number four, five—number seven from the left flank of number six company, moving his little fingaw! Stand steady, men. Shoulder—as you were. Captain Low, what is the matter with your left marker? Press on your butt, sergeant. Steady, men——"

Then the colonel would ride on parade, and would call out: "Slope arms; fours right; quick march!" And we were off.

Now soldiers know an officer when they see him. Our opinion of the poor major was not fit for publication. But we loved Old Paddy, as we called the colonel, like a father.

An officer I liked very much was the officer instructor in musketry. He was one of the best-looking men I have met; and he had "brains in his face." He was a beautiful rifle shot; and he was reasonable and kind; and he understood me. He was very good to me, and I had a good time; for he would have me as one of the musketry markers, and he had great faith in my shooting.

But when there was some talk of giving me the appointment of musketry instructor, he shook his head and smiled. I knew as much about musketry as anyone in the regiment, and he knew I did. But, so I heard, he said: "No. He will be up to all sorts of schoolboy tricks with the men."

He was quite right. I never was good at routine. I should have let all the idiotic reports and statistics get in arrear. I should not have been strict enough. But I think I should have improved the shooting.

There was a little cub of a subaltern in another regiment, to which I was attached, who was detested by every man in barracks. He was new from school, and was not more than eighteen years old, and he was very rich, and a snob of the deepest dye.

This conceited boy used to talk to the men as if they had been dogs. He would tell a sergeant of fifteen years' service that he was a fool, and could not dress a company; and he put a man in the guard-room for coughing in the ranks.

But we had a captain who was a man. A fine slashing, upstanding, tearing, swearing soldier. And one day the little sub was walking round at kit inspection with a gold-mounted

meerschaum pipe in his mouth when the captain came into the room. Ah, we did enjoy it !

I shall not repeat what the captain said. Here was a pert young "cubby subby" actually smoking on parade. It was a flagrant case, but the captain was equal to it. And from that day the sucking Hannibal restrained his zeal. I expect the captain told him a few things in the privacy of the mess.

We had a lieutenant in our company in the Ramchunders who was a very nice fellow, but a martinet. Now our captain was an easy-going man and a fine soldier. He used to inspect the front rank of the company while the lieutenant went half-way down the rear rank. Then he had to wait. So one day, to our great delight, he pretended to think the young officer had done, and he gave the command: "Close order; march." And shut him up between the two ranks. This hint had the desired effect.

I have known that officer to spend a quarter of an hour staring at the belts and buckles of the rear rank. Any sergeant would have done the job in two minutes, and would have seen everything.

In Aldershot the regiment lying next to us had a swearing colonel. Most colonels can swear; but there are specialists. This colonel would get into a rage with his men, and would sit on his horse and curse them until he was purple. The men made a song about him, and sang it to the march-past tune of the regiment. It was funny, but quite unprintable; in which two respects it resembled the colonel.

Then, again, there was a captain of a line regiment who sometimes mounted guard at Spike Island, and who was a character. He was a very big man; so tall and so broad in the beam that he used to fill up the guard-room doorway.

Now, Spike was a gloomy place, and the time must have hung heavily upon the hands of an officer, cooped up by himself in a little guard-room; and I believe this big captain used to be most horribly bored. At any rate, his device for killing time was peculiar. One night when I happened to be sergeant of the guard I noticed some queer movements of the lights in the officer's guard-room, and, thinking something must be wrong, I stepped across and looked into the window.

The big captain was sitting on the back of a chair with his feet on the seat. In each hand he held a candlestick with a candle in it. One candle was lit, the other was not. The captain, with a face of the profoundest gravity, lighted one candle at the other, then blew out the candle he got the light from. After a pause of half a minute he relighted the candle he had blown out, and blew out the other. I thought

at first the poor gentleman had gone mad, but I soon guessed that he was simply bored. How long he played at this curious game, I cannot say, but he went on for a long time, for when I came out to change the sentries he was still at it.

This same captain used to send for a bottle of whisky every time he mounted guard, and as he suspected, not without reason, that the soldier told off to attend upon the officer of the guard loved whisky better than honesty, he set a little trap for him.

Having carefully finished the whisky overnight, he poured some stale beer into the bottle, corked it up, and put it on the table.

In the morning when Pat came to clean the boots the captain snored profoundly. Pat moved about watching the captain, then went up to the cot and touched him; the captain snored on. Then Pat got the bottle, drew out the cork, glanced at the captain, and took a drink. Just as he drank, the captain sat up in bed and roared out a tremendous "Haw, haw, haw!" while Pat, convinced that he was poisoned, ran out of the guard-room and made for the water-tap. The captain never alluded to the incident, nor did Pat.

There used to come on the same guard a very handsome officer of an Irish regiment, who was a favourite, because he not only looked prepossessing, but was very sociable. One night the sergeant of the guard was in the main guard-room writing when the officer walked in—a most unusual thing for an officer to do.

"Sit down, men," he said cheerily; "don't mind me. Sergeant, what are you doing?"

"I'm writing a letter, sir."

"Writing to your sweetheart?" asked the officer, smiling.

The sergeant flushed a little, then looked the officer in the eye, and smiled in his turn. "Yes, sir," said the sergeant, "I'm writing to my girl; and what's worse, I'm writing verses; and what's worse still, sir, I'm getting on badly."

"Oh, I say!" said the officer. "Verses? May I help?"

"If you don't mind, sir, I shall be very glad."

"By Jove," said the officer, "this is ripping! Let me see, what have you got? Ha! Why, that's capital! Now let me have a shot."

The officer, whose slight brogue was very charming, was as clever as he was handsome, and he turned out a love-song for the sergeant which astonished him.

When the letter was finished the officer said: "Come, let us stretch our legs; let us go and visit the sentries." As they went along the ramparts, he stopped and looked down into the prison-yard, where the moon was shining on the wet

gravel, and the black shadows of the warders on duty made lines across the silver.

"Sergeant," said the officer, "it must be devilish hard lines to be penned up behind bars—caught, by Jove, like a rabbit in a gin! I would rather be shot, by Heaven! What do you say?"

"I think I would, sir."

"If I were one of those poor devils," said the officer, "I would be shot. I would run for it and take my chance."

"They wouldn't shoot, sir," said the sergeant; "they would catch you, and then they would put you in chains."

"Chains!" the officer shuddered. "Chains! My God, fancy putting chains on a man!"

When they came back to the guard the officer said: "Well, sergeant, I think I will copy your good example. I will go and write to my sweetheart. Good-night!"

The sergeant, he was a very intelligent chap, went back to his room and thought about the officer.

"He's a lucky chap, that lieutenant," he said to me next day.

"Why?" I asked.

"Well," said my friend, "he's handsome and he's clever, and he's rich and he's good. What more could he be?"

We discussed the subject, my friend and I. I wondered how it was that some men were so handsome.

"Yes," said my friend; "look at the 17th Lancers. Did you ever see so many handsome men together as you can find there in one troop?" And I admitted the truth of his opinion.

How is it, though, that Lancers are so good-looking? And how is it that the 17th are so specially favoured? The last time I saw a squadron of the 17th I was struck by the regularity of their features; they looked like a squadron of Greek statues come to life.

But there was no man in the Lancers as handsome as our Irish lieutenant.

XXVI.

A CHAPTER OF SOLDIERS' WIVES.

One of Kipling's most truthful Army pictures is the portrait of Mother Pummeloe. Mother Pummeloe is the real thing. I knew Mother Pummeloe; but we called her Mother Bowers; and I will call her Mother Bowers.

Mother Bowers was no beauty. She was short and fat

and slovenly; she had a big, slack-mouth, very few teeth, small green eyes, and an untidy head of sandy hair turning grey. She was not refined, Ma Bowers. She could hold her own in the barrack-room or in the married quarters as well as Mme. Angot could hold her own in the market.

One minute of Mother Bowers's lightest badinage would have frightened a district visitor to death.

She could fight as well as talk, and she sometimes smoked a clay pipe over the wash-tub. Also she did not despise gin. But I loved her, and she loved me. And here is our romance.

Mother Bowers had born to her a belated baby. She had lost two children in India, and there was an interval of ten years before the belated one was born—dead. That is to say, the doctor said it was born dead, but Mother Bowers said the doctor was a most unpleasant kind of a storyteller, and that the child lived quite a minute.

Now, this was a sore point. If the baby drew one breath he was entitled to a funeral—a corporal and six men. If he never drew that breath he would simply be put into a box and interred.

Mother Bowers went to see the colour-sergeant. She wanted a funeral. The colour-sergeant thought she was silly and stood to the interment. Mother Bowers wept. She expressed the most unfavourable opinion of the doctor. She took her oath that her baby had a soul, that its soul was now in heaven, and she demanded her rights as an honest woman, who had washed for the company for twenty years, and had nursed Ramchunders, living and dead, in cholera camps in India.

"The doctor said so," persisted the "flag."

"The doctor was full of wine, the baste. I tell you, colour-sergeant, the child's in heaven."

"I wish to——" the "flag" began, but did not finish. Then Mother Bowers shed tears and wiped her eyes on her apron.

"Go away," said the colour-sergeant; "go away."

Then I, seeing an appeal in the eyes of my superior officer which meant, "For the love of Heaven take her away!" and feeling sorry for poor Ma Bowers, suggested that if the colour-sergeant did not object I would get some of the men to volunteer for the funeral party, and I would take charge of the ceremony myself.

"God bless you," said Mother Bowers, "you have a good heart! I'll never forget you."

"Oh, have it your own way!" snapped the colour-sergeant! and retired hastily.

So I got twelve men, and we put on our full dress and our side-arms, and we buried our little brother with all the honours.

It was a trifling service, and one not worth a second thought, and I should have forgotten it if Mother Bowers had. But ma was not built that way.

If I had gone out into the Bay of Biscay in a gale and saved Mother Bowers on a hen-coop, if I had charged a troop of Afghan cavalry and brought back old bald-headed Bowers from under the horses' feet, Mother Bowers, I am convinced, would not have counted it to me so much for grace as she counted that common civility paid to her child. She never forgot it.

When I was very ill on detachment she came up and sat with me and nursed and doctored me until the doctor came. I dare say she saved my life. She told every soul in the regiment of my noble conduct. She would make, or buy, or steal anything she thought I should like to have. And when I left the regiment she blessed me and shed tears.

I told you about Mother Bowers, who had a heart of gold, and who loved to make a hero of me. Now, Mrs. Alice Berry was quite another story.

Alice was an exceedingly pretty girl of twenty, with charming manners and a perfect taste in hats. And Alice married Sergeant Berry; and Sergeant Berry was regarded as a particularly lucky soldier.

Oh, my! Alice was a she devil. She was absolutely fiendish. Before the honeymoon was over she ran up the black flag and opened fire. Poor Berry!

Berry was one of the quietest and nicest men in the Service. Alice drank a whole bottle of brandy one night when he was on guard. When he returned to his happy home she cut his cheek open with a dinner-knife, and pelted him with the domestic crockery. Then she went out, and did not return for a month. When she returned she was jealous. She came into barracks, broke a window, smacked the orderly corporal's face, and then fell upon her husband and clawed him like a wild cat. It took four men to get her outside the gate, and then she shrieked and the civil police arrested her.

This kind of thing went on for weeks, and the sergeant-major put her name on the gate so that she could not get into barracks. She used to prowl about in the hopes of meeting Berry, but Berry, like Brer Rabbit, "lay low."

I met the gentle Alice one night in Plymouth. She was as white as chalk, and her eyes blazed in her head like fire. She started suddenly out of the shadow by the Mount Wise Guard Room, stepped close up to me and said:

"Where is my husband?"

I said: "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Berry, I don't know."

"Liar!" said the gentle Alice, and gave me a good sound box on the ear. This seemed to amuse the men on the Mount Wise guard, so I laughed.

Then Mrs. Berry summed up my character in a few vivid sentences and left me to reform.

That night she jumped into the Hamoaze, but was rescued by a man-of-war's man. He didn't know her.

A week later I was on musketry duty at Staddon, when an orderly came to say a lady wanted me. When I arrived at the gate I found Mrs. Alice. She had omitted some items in the summary of my character, and these she now supplied. Then I made a mistake. I pointed out mildly that she was married to Sergeant Berry, and not to me.

"Married to you! To that——" I don't know what would have happened to me, but at that moment, like the god from the car, appeared Mother Bowers.

I should like to write that scene. But I will restrain my pen. Suffice it to say that the corporal of the guard had never enjoyed himself so much in his life. He told me so.

And then—and then Black Dick, chief of the Pirates, came up. Dick was a big, rough private, ringleader of the hottest pickles in the battalion. Dick took Alice by the scruff of the neck with one hand, slapped her face with the other, and said: "Now get to the devil out of this, you cat!" And Mrs. Berry walked away without a word.

The end of this romance was that Berry deserted, enlisted in another regiment, went to India, and found the gentle Alice waiting for him before he had been there two months.

Then she took cholera and died; and he took it from her, and he died. It must have been a nice change, for him.

Of course, there are soldiers' wives quite unlike gentle Alice and Ma Bowers. But they are just nice, jolly, sensible women, and not good food for copy!

XXVII.

DR. PADDY FIVE-EYES.

Dr. Paddy Five-Eyes is one of my happiest memories; I have blest him often; I wouldn't have missed him for worlds. His name was not Five-Eyes, of course. We called him that because he wore a pair of spectacles and an eyeglass, all at once. His name was not Paddy either; we called him that because he was rather Irish.

Oh, he was a jewel! He was quite too beautifully utter.

I had fallen in a high jump whilst skylarking, and had twisted my arm. I went to the hospital and showed it to the doctor.

" 'Tis a sprain," said the doctor, " nothing more. But a sprain is sometimes a long botheration."

He rang for the hospital sergeant, and went and stood with his back to the fire. He was very short and very stout, and as he stood with his arms under his coat-tails, and his spectacles gleaming, he reminded one of Mr. Pickwick.

" This," said the doctor, " is one of those fooling cases that are more trouble than they are worth. A compound fracture of the thigh, Sergeant Mullins, like that of the blackguard Benning—Denning—Stenning—phwat is the rascal's name—the man of the artillery? Brady? True. A compound fracture like that affords one some satisfaction and brings one some kudos; but a devil's trick like this, a mere twist of the joint, with perhaps an injury to the ligatures, is neither fun nor profit. Had your arm been broken, corporal, 'twould have been more satisfactory. This thing may keep me tinkering with you for weeks."

Encouraged by the benevolence of the doctor's face and the freedom of his manner, I ventured to express a hope that he would not keep me in hospital. Now, to display the least desire to avoid hospital was to tread on the doctor's tenderest corn. Directly I spoke his face changed. His brows knitted themselves into a frown, his eyes blazed with anger, and he snatched up a blackthorn stick and struck the table a sounding thump.

" You impertinent young spalpeen!" he roared, " what do you mean? Not take you into hospital! Is my hospital a prison, where men are punished; or a hotel, where they must pay? Do you think I want ye here consuming good rations and destroying her Majesty's medical comfort? Sergeant Mullins, let this fellow be placed under arrest; damme, put him on low diet, and apply a stiff blister to the small of his back."

" Yes, sir," said Sergeant Mullins.

" Not take ye into hospital," the doctor began again. " If ye're immortal soul depended on my sending ye to medicine and duty, I'd keep ye in hospital. For what is ye're soul to me? I'm paid by the Queen to look after your worthless carcass. That is Government property; but the soul of you is no affair of her Majesty's, and'll never take a chill when you're done with it."

With this the doctor slapped on his hat, took his shillelagh under his arm, and, whistling a bandy-legged bulldog with a black eye, bounced out of the surgery in a huff.

"Sit down," said Sergeant Mullins coolly, "the doctor will be back just now."

And sure enough in a few minutes the doctor returned, smiling and rosy.

"Sergeant Mullins," said he, "have this man's arm painted and strapped, and put him in No. 2 Ward. Did I order him under arrest?"

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant.

"Well, on second thoughts," said the doctor, "you need not put him under arrest."

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant; and he led me out.

"Oh, Sergeant Mullins!" the doctor called, as we went along the corridor.

"Yes, sir."

"What diet did I say?"

"Low diet, sir."

"Then," said the doctor, "ye need not mind the low diet, but just feed the rascal well."

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant.

"And—ah—Mullins!" the doctor shouted after us as we went upstairs.

"Yes, sir."

"Don't trouble about the blister," said the doctor.

An hour later the doctor came to see me. He asked me a great many questions; and then sat looking at me curiously for some time.

"Ye don't drink?" he said.

"No, sir."

"Nor smoke?"

"No, sir."

"Ye have good sight; as I have had. I would give ten years of my life for a pair of eyes like yours. Do ye shoot well?"

"I have done fairly well, sir."

"Have ye a girl?"

"No, sir."

"Don't get one, they are a shocking botheration. Have ye a watch?"

"No, sir."

"'Tis wise. A watch costs as much to keep as a small family, and there's clocks in every town. Sergeant Mullins."

"Yes, sir."

"Give this boy a glass of wine with his dinner; and let him read if he wishes."

"Yes, sir."

And that was my first experience of Paddy Five-Eyes.

A few weeks later there was an affray in Brading between

the police and some of our men. Two of ours, one with his head tied up and one with a broken finger, were reported sick; and I marched them with the sick party to the hospital.

"Where did you get that cracked head, ye rascal?" the doctor asked Private Page.

"It was in town, sir. A policeman struck me."

"Oh, listen to the innocent pride of his mother!" cried the doctor. "Listen to the bleeding lamb! So the police attacked ye? Did you hear that, Sergeant Mullins? Why, ye impudent blackguard, what do you mean by going about the public streets assaulting peaceful constables and bringing black shame on the Service? You ought to be ashamed of yourself, as I'm ashamed for ye. Come here till I mend ye're head. Oh, look at it! Who did that?"

"A policeman, sir."

"'Deed, he must be a nice man. I wish I had him here."

The doctor attended to Page, and then turned to the other man. "So you've broke a finger. Faith, I don't suppose ye did it pickin' daisies. What devilment were ye up to? Hey?"

"I fell, sir."

"Ye fell. Sergeant Mullins, the gentleman fell. And what the devil were you doing to fall? Answer me; and none of your tricks."

"I was running, sir."

"Oh, Mullings, he was running to Mass! What's your name?"

"Moore, sir."

The doctor banged his fist on the table.

"I'm double d——d if I didn't think so!" he shouted.

"Sergeant Mullins, this is the blackguard that ran away. Oh, the holy saints in heaven! This is the soldier that ran away from a couple or three of country policemen, and left his comrade to get his head broke. Did he run, Page? Tell me? Tell me, or be my mother's soul I'll—I'll put a blister on ye're stomach as big as a barrack-room bread-tin! Did he run? D'ye hear me?"

"He—— There was a lot of police, sir. I couldn't tell whether he ran or not, sir."

"'Tis a lie!" said the doctor. "I heard of it. I am disgraced; the Army is disgraced; me hospital is disgraced with such a wretch for a patient. Ye ran. Ye left ye're comrade to be killed. Oh, the divil! Oh, shame!"

Here the doctor threw his hat on the floor and kicked it, threw his extra eyes into the letter-tray, and, snatching up his cudgel, began to dance.

"We are disgraced!" he roared. "The colours are shamed.

Oh, give me a drink an' the flure, an' I'd fight all the bobbies in Brading."

While this was going on, the escort, the sick, and Sergeant Mullins stood stiffly to attention, and looked as wooden as Dutch dolls. No one dared to smile. When the doctor had had his fling, he became suddenly calm and professional.

"Sergeant Mullins, put Page in No. 3 Ward. Put this man in a ward by himself. Put both on low diet. Corporal, find my spectacles. Mullins, give me some smaller splints." When he had dressed Moore's finger the doctor put on his hat, and called his dog. As he reached the door he turned. "Sergeant Mullins," he said, "look at this dog. Look him in the face."

"Yes, sir."

"'Tis the first time since he was pupped that I have ever known the animal to blush. But then, Mullins, he has never imagined until this day that a grown soldier, wid a fist like a two-pound loaf, and a head as thick as a fifty-six-pound shell, would turn tail to the civil power. Page, you are a man. You have done credit to your regiment. But *this*"—the doctor gave a shrug of contempt, and stalked out, followed by his blushing bull.

He was a great man, and I could write about him all day.

XXVIII.

QUEEN'S BAD BARGAINS.

Pompey Pride and I sat cleaning our things and talking one afternoon, when the barrack-room door was thrown violently open, and there entered an apparition—a soldier, very tall and very thin, with an ashy white face that was almost a skull, sunken, inflamed eyes, and a bare head cropped as close as a shaven chin.

I have never seen a man so emaciated, so wild, so horrible. This spectre seemed to leap through the doorway, like a harlequin through a trick window, and directly he appeared he spoke in "a windy shriek."

"Barney Stitchfield, you dogs! Barney, home from college! Barney, the pride of the Service. Hallo! Is that Pompey the Pirate? Come here and kiss me, darling, or I'll stick a fork in your eye!"

Having introduced himself, the grisly shade kicked over the tea-can, threw a plate at me, then one at Pompey; and then lifted a rifle from the arm-rack and broke the stock with one blow across a bed-cot.

"Hurroo!" cried the spectre, with a horrible grin. "Here's sweet Barney. Barney, the wallflower, that grows on prison walls. Yahooop! Woho! Where's our pretty colour-sergeant? Let me go and cuddle that decorative son of — Yeho! Who says blood?"

I looked at Pompey interrogatively, and shuddered.

Pompey shrugged his shoulders.

"It's Barney Stitchfield," he said. "He's just come out of hell. He's been in hell five years. He'll be back there in a week. He's a Queen's Bad Bargain."

A Queen's bad bargain is a man who refuses to soldier. Let us take the case of Barney. This man had enlisted for twelve years. He had been three times to prison, where he had served two sentences of twelve months and one of five years. On the occasion when I made his acquaintance he got another two years. Besides this, he had done one year as a soldier. So that he had served, or did serve, nine years in prison and one in the ranks, and he had still eleven years of his service to do. The time spent in prison does not count. Also, a man in prison loses his pay.

Now a military prison is, as Pompey said, hell. Barney had spent nine years in hell, and had lost nine years' pay, to escape from eleven years' service. If he had "soldiered," and had saved his pay for three years he could have bought his discharge.

But glance now at the bargain made by the Queen. Here is a perfectly useless man, kept at the national expense for nine years! What did it cost to feed, to confine, to watch, and to torture poor Barney Stitchfield for those nine years?

But what would you do with the Queen's bad bargains? someone will ask. I answer with a counter-question: What would an employer of labour do with such a bad bargain?

A clerk who went to the office drunk, broke the windows, and refused to work, would be instantly discharged; the employer would not shut him up in a strong room, and pay a man to watch and feed him for ten years.

He would simply "fire him," as the Americans say.

But there is another kind of Queen's bad bargain—for instance, Buffalo Adams.

Buffalo was a mad collier, and he joined in South Wales. He was a bull-necked, sullen fellow, possessed of great physical strength. I should think he was about five-and-twenty years of age. Buffalo was an atavist.

He was an illustrious ancestor of *Pithecanthropus Alalus*, Esquire, come back to revisit the glimpses of the moon.

He was worse than any animal. No animal has vices. Buffalo had nothing else—except appetites. He was a horrible

creature, horrible to listen to, horrible to look upon; his complexion was "perfect gallows."

Buffalo made a bad impression from the first. His long black hair was matted together, his skin was grimed with dirt, his great dog's teeth were brown. The new recruit stood scowling in the pay-room before Sergeant Daly, a clean, smart, pleasant non-commissioned officer.

The sergeant asked him his name, his age, his trade. Then he asked:

"What is your religion?"

Buffalo bit off a chew of tobacco, looked a deadly insult at the orderly corporal, and said:

"I'm a Christian."

The colour-sergeant smiled.

"I'm glad to hear it," he said. "You don't look like one. Corporal Bates, put this man in No. 4 Mess. And—er—give him some rotten-stone, and a long-scrubber, and show him the wash-house. D'ye hear, Adams? Get the outer crust off you. This is not a black regiment." And the "flag" arose, buttoned his tunic, hitched up his sword, spread his chest, and went swaggering off as bright as a jewel and as clean as a star.

The next day Buffalo began his career. When Joe Slingers, commonly called "Merrylegs," asked Buffalo pleasantly to lend him his face to pound pipeclay with, Buffalo smote Joseph on the mazzard with a basin. Joe patted Buffalo on the head with a boot, and the corporal of the room came in and sent the pair of them to the guard-room.

Joe got off, but Buffalo got seven days.

The next day the drill-sergeant ran Buffalo in for laziness at recruits' drill. The day after he was run in for being drunk on parade. The colonel hinted that this was becoming monotonous, and began to drop hints about cells. Then the sergeant-major had one of his rare moments of compunction. He spoke up for Adams, and begged him off. More—he went and told the drill-sergeant to be easy with the man, and he asked the colour-sergeant of the company to keep an eye on him.

"He's a sullen fellow," said the "major," "not very bright, and he's got a rotten bad start. Give him a chance."

But Bonass never gave any human soul a chance. Bonass had Buffalo at defaulters' drill, and Bonass rattled him and cursed him over the stoniest parts of the parade, under the blazing sun, until the nether fires burned up in Buffalo's dark soul, and he saw red. Then at a word he threw his rifle at the sergeant's feet, swore a couple of poisoned oaths, and started at a run for his room. Bonass put him in the guard-room.

The next morning the sergeant-major saw Buffalo once more between the escort, and stopped to speak to him.

"Why, man," said the "major," "what bad luck you have! What have you been doing now?"

Buffalo stepped out of the ranks with lifted fist and a snarl like a wolf, and said— However, it was something rude he said.

Then the sergeant-major showed his temper.

"Sergeant of the guard! March the prisoner back and handcuff him." Buffalo gave a shriek, and—

When he got in front of the colonel Private Adams sported the solemnity of the proceedings by smashing the orderly-room inkstand with his manacled hands, and by expressing very briefly, but very trenchantly, his opinion of the commanding officer and the regiment. The colonel gave him seven days' cells.

When Buffalo came out of cells he got straight to business. He broke out of barracks, brought in a quart of rum, drank as much as he could, and then tried to murder Private Harrison with a poker. Harrison shouted, and was heard by Sergeant Mockler and me as we passed. We ran in, and so did Johnny Bright, a big, good-humoured young recruit.

Harrison, badly hurt, was lying in the fender. Buffalo had retired into a corner with a drawn bayonet in each hand, and was giving an illuminated address to the British Army, coupled with an offer to see the blood of any sweet gentleman who ventured within his reach.

Tommy Mockler, who would have retained his sangfroid through an earthquake, turned calmly to John Bright, and said: "Take those weapons from that man."

Bright looked at Buffalo's eyes, and at the gleaming bayonets, and at Tommy Mockler.

"Private Bright disarm Private Adams," said Mockler.

Bright glanced despairingly round, then he had a bright idea—I beg pardon—snatching up a heavy form, he held it at the charge, and, rushing upon Adams, knocked all the breath out of his body with one blow.

Buffalo was taken to the guard-room. When he had been there a while, he came to the grated window of the prisoners' room and asked to see the orderly officer. He was told to wait. About eleven p.m., the officer took the guard, and Buffalo was called to the grid to speak to him. Buffalo only wished to give the officer his opinion of the corps. The officer did not wait, and only heard Buffalo's opinion of the colonel and the senior major, but I think he heard enough. He seemed to be surprised.

This time the colonel was away on leave, and the junior

major, after gazing at Buffalo in amazement for a minute, said to the sergeant-major :

"Haw! Sergeant-majah! Is the prisonah —haw—an Englishman?"

The "major" thought he was Welsh.

"Haw! He—he doesn't look human. Haw! Send him away. Admonished."

The sergeant-major shook his head as he left the orderly-room. He did not like the looks of Buffalo.

Buffalo went to his barrack-room and drank raw rum. Then he went on defaulters' fatigue for the day. In the evening he drank more rum. Then Evan Evans, a newly joined recruit of A Company, came into the room where Buffalo was sitting smoking and scowling.

Buffalo looked up and met the eyes of Evans. The two men stood still, staring. The other men began to wonder what was in the wind. Then Buffalo spoke. He said :

"You here, you black beast!"

"Ho! Jem Davids," said Evans, "who'd have thought o' seeing' you?"

No other words were spoken. The two men silently pulled off their tunics, turned up their shirtsleeves, tightened their belts, rubbed their shoes on the floor, and fell upon each other like wild beasts.

They were well matched, and they meant murder. They struck with all their great strength, and then closed. Then there was a flash of steel, and Evans had blood on his face.

The men leapt upon them, and took the knife away from Buffalo, and the colour-sergeant came in and asked for an explanation.

Evans explained. With four men holding him, with his shirt ripped open to the waist, with a deep gash in his cheek, with his eyes like hot coals, and his whole body heaving in long gasps, he panted out the story.

Buffalo had deserted from a dozen regiments. Then he and Evans had met and fought in a Welsh corps. Then both had deserted, and by accident had met once more.

"You snake," Evans panted. "You was my pal! I lent him money—he stole my watch—he tried to murder me! You wait—wait till I get free again! You stabbed me in the back! Thought I was dead! You wait——"

That was the end of Buffalo. He got five years and his discharge. Evans got forty-two days.

We had a fellow in our company—H Company—named—well, we will call him Bailer. He was known as Boss Bailer, because he had a cast in one eye. Boss was a smart young man, and, except for the slight squint, a good-looking one.

Also he was a wonderful whistler. He could imitate any bird, and could whistle like a flute or a piccolo. Thereby hangs the tale.

Boss got a "billet" as servant to one of our lieutenants—a rich man. Boss's boss went away on a few days' leave. Boss took leave also. And he took all the money and rings his master had left loose, and he put on a suit of his master's clothes. And he did not come back. And the police never even found a clue.

A year later there arrived an escort from the Green Linnets to fetch a private who had deserted from the Linnets and enlisted in ours.

And the sergeant of the Linnets and our sergeant-major were walking down the lines, and as they passed the drum-room, a drummer named Bromage, who whistled wonderfully, was sitting at a window whistling a jig.

"Who's that whistling, sir?" asked the Linnet.

"That's Bromage," said the "major"; "he's a remarkable whistler."

"Yes, he's good," said the Linnet; "but we have a better."

"Indeed," said the "major."

"Yes," said the Linnet, "he can whistle like a piccolo, and he can whistle like a flute, he can imitate any bird that sings; I have never met his match."

The "major" stopped, and looked at the Linnet thoughtfully. "That's curious," said the "major."

"What, sir?"

"That whistler of yours. How long have you had him?"

"He's a recruit, sir; joined a few months ago."

"Ha!" said the major. "Young man? Tallish? Dark curls? Slight cast in one eye?"

"That's the man, sir," said the Linnet, raising his eyebrows and opening his mouth.

"Good!" said the "major." "When you get back, put him in the guard-room—he's a deserter from ours. His name was Bailer. He's a thief."

And so Boss Bailer was caught and sent to prison, and was discharged as a bad bargain. But it was an odd chance.

If Bromage had not whistled that day at that moment, Boss Bailer might have gone scot-free.

XXIX.

A RUN OF LUCK.

We were finishing up the musketry course at Staddon ; and Tommy Mockler, the sergeant-instructor, and I had taken out two unhappy wretches to make their last attempt to get out of the third class.

It was quite a forlorn hope, for these men belonged to the hopeless kind of shots who shore up the shoulder to meet the recoil. They never had got out of the third class, and they never would get out of the third class, and there was no health in them.

Mockler was a fine shot, and a good fellow, but he lacked imagination. I have explained that I was not made instructor, and why. But I had some imagination ; and it is sometimes useful. Let us see.

Tommy was coaching the two victims ; I was keeping the register ; Jack Rozier was in the marker's butt. We had the Martini rifle, and the men had to get forty points with ten shots at 200 yards and ten shots at 300 yards.

Tommy did his best. He tried encouragement, and he tried irony. He even stood in front of one man and allowed him to rest the rifle on his shoulder. And then the bullet fell short.

Tommy got very sick. One man, we will call him Aye, had missed his first six shots, and the other, whom we will call Bee, had made a centre with the first shot, which had gone off as he came to the present, and had missed the other five.

Tommy almost hugged Aye as he was aiming for the seventh time.

"Now," he said, "steady, my dear lad, steady. Don't think about your shoulder. Don't think about your rifle. Think you are in the canteen drinking a pint ; think you are in bed, just falling asleep ; think"—bang ! "Oh dear, oh dear, fifty yards short again ! Another lump of turf out of the same hole. You should have been a gravedigger."

Aye ordered his arms, and sighed, and Bee came forward as white and wretched as if he had been going to shoot himself. Tommy took the register out of my hand.

"See what you can do with them," he said.

I went up to Bee, who was all of a quiver, and said :

"Buck up, Billy, you hit one shot. Now fire when I give the word."

So I gave him the words. "Present—fire !" and I rapped

out the word fire so sharply that he fired before he was ready, and he got another centre.

Tommy laughed.

"By gum," he said, "if we could only drug the pair of 'em and let them fire in a trance, they'd be marksmen."

I was primed up with pride, and I tried the trick with Aye, but he pulled right round, and nearly shot a sheep in the next field. Tommy sighed, and took out his pipe.

"It's no use, Bob," he said, "they couldn't hit their own parish if they were in the middle of it. Let 'em get it over. Let 'em miss the other baker's dozen. They are the missing links."

When they had finished their ten shots at 200 yards, I read out the scores: Private Aye, 0; Private Bee, 6. We marched sadly back to the 300 yards point, and began again, on the knee. Aye, a miss; Bee, a miss.

Then Tommy said to me: "See the mess out, Bob, and bring me the register. I can't stand it. I'm going into the fort. I'm ashamed of my regiment. I wish I'd gone for a sailor." And Tommy walked off and left us.

After that a very remarkable thing happened. Private Aye could not get out. Nine bull's-eyes would not have saved him. But Private Bee, who only wanted thirty-four points, could get out if he could make seven bull's-eyes and two centres with his nine shots. It would be a miracle almost. But—it happened.

When we went up to check the target, Rozier said: "Shooting's improved at 300 yards, sergeant." I said it had.

"Who's been shooting?" Rozier asked.

"Oh," I said, "Bee has been hitting. He has got out."

"Well," said Rozier, gazing blankly at the target, "he's a surprise, that Bee. He misses eight out of ten shots at 200 yards. Then he goes back and misses a shot at 300 yards. Then he gets a centre a foot above the bull; then he gets a centre an inch above the bull; then he gets on the bull—seven times."

"Yes," I said, in an off-hand way, "Billy has done very well."

Rozier looked up at the sky, and soliloquised:

"Blest if this isn't a revelation. Here's a complete rotter creeps into the bull like an old hand, gets on it seven times at 300 yards, and puts six of 'em in a space you could cover with your hand. You could have done no better yourself, sergeant."

Rozier picked up the whitewash-brush and began to whistle "See, the Conquering Hero."

"What did Sergeant Mockler think of it?" he asked.

"Mockler was not there," said I.

Rozier stopped whistling. There was a blank silence. Then he said: "Shall I wash out, sergeant?"

"Yes," said I; and I walked thoughtfully away with the register under my arm. I had to tell Mockler yet. Mockler would be surprised. Mockler lacked imagination.

I marched into the sergeants' mess with the book under my arm; and there was Tommy, smoking and looking happy. "Well," said he, "how did those mole-grubbers go on?"

"Oh, all right," I said, carelessly, "Aye never hit the target once in his twenty rounds. Billy Bee bucked up and got out." Mockler took the pipe out of his mouth—dear old Tommy, I can see him now—and said:

"Billy Bee—got—*what*?"

"He got out," I said calmly; "he got a centre directly you went, and——"

"Directly I went?" said Tommy. "So: I heard the hit."

I looked Tommy straight in the eye, and handed him the register.

"H'm!" said he, reading. "Private Bee: Miss, centre, centre, bull, bull, bull—*seven of 'em*. Seven strike-me-purple-bull's-eyes.

Tommy and I stood to attention, and looked at each other.

"It is wonderful!" said Tommy. "And I missed it! I wish I'd stayed now. But if I had, of course, he wouldn't have got 'em. That's my luck."

"I wouldn't have missed if for a pension," said I.

"So I should think," said Tommy, gazing pointedly at the string of bull's-eyes. Then he said: "It was very good of you to see them through; thanks very much. We shall have to tell Mr. Nott. He'll be surprised."

"Ah, hum, yes," I said. "I dare say Mr. Nott *will* be surprised."

"We'll step across now," said Tommy, "and tell him."

Mr. Nott, the officer instructor, was walking into the fort with the captain of Billy Bee's company, and we met them.

"By the way, Mockler," said the captain, "how has my precious snipe-shooter gone on?"

Tommy stood up as stiff as a pillar-box and answered in an orderly-room tone of voice: "Aye missed the whole twenty, sir; but Bee got out."

"Well done, Bee," said the captain, looking pleased; "good boy. Let me see the register."

Tommy produced the register, and the two officers looked over it. Mr. Nott saw the string of misses to Billy Bee's name, and then the string of bulls, and he jumped to

attention. "Seven bulls—running—at 300 yards," said Mr. Nott in an awed tone—"seven!"

"Seven of 'em, sir," said poor Tommy, without a blush.

Then Mr. Nott looked at Tommy as Tommy had looked at me; and Tommy looked at Mr. Nott as I had looked at Tommy. I stood to attention and looked wooden.

"H'm!" said Mr. Nott, closing one eye and fixing the other on the captain, "this is a devilish extraordinary exhibition of shooting. By George, it's the most devilishly remarkable thing I can remember!"

"Never was more surprised in my life, sir," said Tommy, and I felt that he meant it.

"How did he *do* it, Sergeant Blatchford?" asked Mr. Nott, turning his open eye on me.

"Well, sir," I said, "I think there was a good deal of luck in it. I don't think he could do it again."

Mr. Nott smiled a meaning smile. "I don't believe he *could* do it again," said he. Thereupon Captain Marshall laughed, said he was glad it was his man who had the luck, and the two officers walked away.

And whether or not that had anything to do with my not getting the instructorship when Mockler went to Ireland I don't know. But Billy Bee did no third-class drills that winter.

But it *was* a curious thing, wasn't it? When I think what an impossible shot Bee was, and when I think of those bull's-eyes all in the space of a tea-saucer, I protest I can hardly believe it myself.

XXX.

PRISONERS AND CAPTIVES.

There is too much punishment in the Army; discipline does not require it. I know that many old soldiers will not agree with me here; but I shall stick to my point.

Soldiers are sent to prison for trivial offences. The prison treatment, unless there has been a great change recently, is horribly severe.

I have known a man get two years' hard labour for trying to strike a sergeant—for he did not strike him. I have known a man get six months' hard labour for being drunk when he paraded for picket. I have known a corporal reduced to the ranks and sent to prison for six months because he had a few glasses of beer before he called to deliver an order to the governor of a prison. Such sentences are inhuman, foolish, and unnecessary.

But the old-school martinet will say : " You cannot maintain discipline without severity." I deny that. I say that if you cannot maintain discipline without such punishments you cannot maintain discipline at all.

Discipline is not maintained by unjust punishment ; discipline never was maintained by unjust punishment. Discipline is maintained by the will-power, the judgment, and the example of the non-commissioned officers.

What is the use of punishing such men as Barney Stitchfield and Buffalo Adams ? You break the men's health, you spoil their lives, and you make them a burden on the taxpayer. But you do not make soldiers of them. Such men are not sane. They should be discharged from the Army.

But the moral effect of such punishments. What is the moral effect of brutality and injustice ? Soldiers are not fools ; nor are they cowards. Barney got two years' hard labour for breaking the stock of a gun. Does anyone suppose that restrained other soldiers from breaking guns ? We did not want to break guns. The soldier loves his rifle—if he is a soldier. If he is not a soldier he ought not to be allowed to draw soldier's pay.

If we are to be told that harsh sentences and cruel and degrading punishments are essential, why should we not be told that flogging is essential ? In the bad old days it was a common thing for soldiers to receive two or three hundred lashes. Flogging was then held to be essential, just as imprisonment is now held to be essential. But since the cat has been done away with, the discipline has not deteriorated.

An ignorant lance-corporal of a few months' service insults and goads a soldier, a man of long service, and in a moment of rage, the soldier punches him on the nose. For that he may get six months or a year of cruel and degrading punishment in a prison. I have known it happen.

Fifty years ago for such an offence a soldier would have been flogged almost to death.

All the history of penal laws shows that the severer the law the more prevalent the crime.

Why cannot discipline be preserved in the Army without these brutal sentences ? It can be preserved in civil life. The discipline in offices, in workshops, on railways, is as good as the discipline in a regiment. Yet a clerk, or a mechanic, or a shunter cannot be sent to hard labour for a year for pushing a head clerk or swearing at an employer. Why should it be an article of faith that only soldiers and sailors are so degraded, so senseless, and so vicious that they cannot be managed without a specially cruel and vindictive law ?

Those who cannot manage children without the cane or

soldiers without the whip are not fit to manage any human beings under any circumstances.

If a barrack-room is untidy, if the men are unruly, it is not because the sergeant is not severe—it is because he is incapable.

I have served as a sergeant in two regiments, and have been in charge of many rough and reckless men. But I never needed a Mutiny Act nor a corporal's guard to protect me or support me. I could always get as much out of my men as any martinet, and more. I needed no police but the men themselves. If any man had attacked me the other men would have half killed him.

I had in my company one or two of the greatest ruffians in the service. If I had been a bad sergeant those men would have been in prison, and I should have been often in danger. But I would stand quite still and look a mad ruffian in the eye and say, "Put down that knife," and he would put it down.

On the night when a young soldier of the 96th tried to hit a sergeant and got two years for it, he did hit me, and he got nothing.

But when he was tried, and I gave evidence and did my best to get him off, he gave me a look which meant volumes. Which sergeant did that man and the Army the most good—the sergeant who got him two years for nothing, or the sergeant who got a punch in the chest and thought no more about it?

If I were in command of a regiment, I should pray that no officer nor sergeant in the corps might be a martinet or a bully. Martinets and bullies are criminals.

The worst man in my company was taken ill one night with colic. I knew how to treat him, for I had been treated for colic myself. We sent for the doctor, but he was away. It was the middle of the night. We had no hospital within two miles, and it was winter.

I saved that man's life, as the doctor said when he came; and there was not a better man in the company from that day. Soldiers are very human.

The minor punishments of soldiers are equally improper. Sergeant-Major Edmondson points out in his book on the Army that defaulters of the Guards are made to do their punishment drill in a public place, and it is a common thing for civilians to stand and laugh at the soldiers while they are being humbugged about in marching order.

This is disgraceful. It ought to be stopped. Half the men doing defaulters' drill at any time are being punished for the most trifling offences. Is it necessary to treat soldiers in this way? Is it wise? Does it encourage recruiting? Does it inspire the men with zeal and love for the Service?

Imagine this system applied in civil life! A compositor puts a wrong letter in a word, the "reader" does not notice it. Next morning the two men are marched through the offices by an escort with drawn bayonets; and the manager orders the compositor to do four hours' overtime every day for a week, and not to leave his home, except to come to his work, during that time. The "reader" is let off with a caution, but is warned that if it happens again his wages will be reduced by 20 per cent. Imagine it! Would the men stand it? No.

Is it impossible to get a paper properly set and turned out without such foolery? Not at all. Then why is it impossible to get duty done by the Grenadier Guards or the 17th Lancers without such foolery?

Here are some much-needed reforms for our Army. First, promotion from the ranks; second, temporary corporalships and acting-sergeants; third, the abolition of imprisonment; fourth, the abolition of pack-drill; fifth, a higher standard of efficiency for officers; sixth, the prompt expulsion from the Army of drunken, incapable, insubordinate, or useless men. Add to these better pay and more privileges for non-commissioned officers, and the discipline and efficiency of the Army will be immensely improved.

Prison indispensable? Nonsense! We do without it in the telegraph service. We manage in the Army and Navy without the cat. Treat your soldiers with proper respect and they will respect themselves.

XXXI.

THE HUMOUR OF THE GUARD.

Some soldiers do not like detachment duty because it is quiet. But easy times in a fort by the sea suited me very well, and I have enjoyed myself thoroughly in the forts at Hythe, Bembridge, Popton, and Staddon. Indeed, when I come to think of it, I got a very large share of detachment service.

My first experience of the kind was at Bembridge, in the Isle of Wight. Here F Company were hidden away on the top of a steep down, under the care of a sensible captain, who did not believe in any kind of hustling.

I have often, in recent years, stood on the old drawbridge and looked at the old gate, thinking of the jolly days—and nights—I spent there.

Bembridge Fort is obsolete now, and there are no merry Ramchunders in its casemated rooms.

I really think the Government ought to give me that old fort. It would make a splendid rest home, and I would contrive to make it livelier than it is at present. And yet, perhaps, I should see ghosts there.

Still, when the Government of a grateful country do discover my deserts, I would rather have Bembridge Fort than a knighthood.

Discipline is generally relaxed on detachment; at least, such has been my experience. At Bembridge we had light drill, and lighter duty; and the men of F Company made hay in their own fashion.

One of my favourite sports was mounting guard. As the other young corporals liked to go over to Ryde of an evening, and as I always was one for home, I used to take the guard very often for one or other of my friends. Indeed, I believe I have mounted guard as often as four times in a week.

The captain was a fatherly old officer; the lieutenant—since a distinguished commanding officer—was a pleasant and amiable young man, with no nonsense about him; the colour-sergeant, who, I believe, regarded me as a kind of harmless crank, was always good to me; so I did as many guards as I pleased.

I have spoken of the guard as an amusement. The guard-room at Bembridge Fort was better than any theatre, for the following reasons:

The captain did not like a lot of prisoners at orderly-room, the colour-sergeant did not want "crime," the men did like a lot of beer, and it was miles to the nearest inn.

This meant that men were late every night—late for Tattoo or late returning off pass. It meant, also, that the belated arrivals were not always as sober as the Articles of War required them to be.

Now a corporal on guard had to use his own judgment. If he did his duty, he must do it justly. If he made a prisoner of one culprit, he must not let another pass. If he let none pass who ought to be detained, he would have from a dozen to thirty prisoners in the morning; and then the good old captain would glare at the corporal and tie knots in his beard, and the colour-sergeant would glare at the corporal and swallow hard, and nearly screw the ends off his long moustaches.

So the corporal stopped his watch, and had a good time; at least, I did.

Tattoo was at ten. There would be several corporals on pass, and many men about.

Not a soul would appear before midnight. Then the fun began. It was a tireless source of joy to me to note the difference of demeanour of the various men. Let me describe a typical night.

About half-past twelve would arrive the first man—the confident man.

“Halt! Who goes there?”

“Friend.”

Private Jim Candy, absent from Tattoo and happily intoxicated, flings open the guard-room door and steps up to the table.

“Evenin’, corporal,” says he. “’Tis a dirthy night. I’ll be afther lightin’ me pipe at ye’re candle. Thank ye kindly, and good-night to yez.”

Suiting the action to the word, James would light his dudeen at the candle and swagger off on the straightest course he could steer. Of course, he never thought of such a thing as arrest. But, bravely as he carried it, I always knew that he breathed a sigh of relief when he was well past the sentry.

One night Corporal Clarke astonished this joker by putting him in a cell and leaving him to cool his heels in the dark for a few hours before he let him go. But when he met me next time on guard James played the same old bluff and heaved the same old sigh of relief behind the sentry-box when he got past.

James being safe, the next comer takes his chance. This is the apologetic man: a small, red Yorkshireman named Bates. Bates steps up to the table and holds on to the leg. His cap is “at the port,” and very few of his buttons are in the buttonholes. But his face is quite grave, and his manners are a credit to the company.

“’Scuse me, corp’l. Awfully late. Facsh ish, been delayed; showin’ gentleman (hic) way to Sha—Sha—Shanklin. ’Scuse me, corp’l. Any shansh?”

“Get off to your bed, Billy; and don’t fall down on the parade—the officer’s in his room.”

“Thanksh, corp’l. Awfully cu-rious mishtake about the (hic) time. Thanksh ver’ mush. Goo’-nigh’.”

William lets go the table, falls over the coffee-can, dives through the doorway, apologises to the sentry-box for jostling it, and tries to strike a match on the sentry.

“Whoo-hoop! Yeho! Stand by. Here’s Yom Ryan the beauty. Here’s your sweet William, drunk again. Yeho!” And Private William Ryan falls through the doorway and tries to swim under the table.

Him we pick up and deposit on the guard bed.

"You lie there, you Irish lunatic, till you cool off!" says Watty Sinclair. The beauty subsides into a sad and silent reverie, which lasts until the arrival of Tommy Dagan—the lady-killer.

Tommy, who is the ugliest and dirtiest soldier in the regiment, has lied about his imaginary triumphs in the field of love until he almost believes the lies himself. It is the wont of Thomas to disappear of an evening for some hours, and to return full of bad beer and vain imaginings, and recite his hypothetical adventures to a more or less scornful and rude audience.

Ryan hates him, loathes him, despises him. Ryan cannot keep his tongue still when Dagan is romancing.

Tommy looks round for a sympathetic listener, and fixes upon old Tim Doyle, who is sitting by the fire awaiting permission to go to bed. Tim never asks for a chance. He sits contentedly and talks politics. If he is a prisoner—well, he is a prisoner; who can control his fate? If he is set free, it is well. He will lurch off to bed and dream about the Rooshians and the Prooshians. But Tim never troubles anyone. He is the quietest and kindest of men.

Dagan sidles up to Tim and begins his amorous strain. He begins in a hoarse whisper, but some of his phrases trickle through, and Ryan hears them.

"Man! a great time. Over beyant Shanklin; on the cliffs. Man, ye should have seen her! Be the gates iv London she's like a milk-white doe. Och, the divale the like of her could be found on this side St. George's Channel. The oies iv her!"

"I know them oies," says Ryan; "they're glass."

"Don't moind the ignorant clown, Tim," says Dagan; "he's drunk."

"True, true," interpolates the beauty; "she do drink, she do."

Dagan goes on:

"She was houldin' me arrum an steppin' like a fairy dancin' a minuet——"

"Liar!" cries Ryan; "she has flat feet. She has feet like badly folded coats. I know her; her name's Mulligan."

Here Tim sees a chance of escape. He catches Ryan's eye and begins to talk his favourite politics.

"'Deed, then, Ryan, avic," he stammers, "there'll be the full iv somebody's eye in the Balkans. If the Rooshians an' the Prooshians join forces, yez may lay to it there'll be wigs on the green——"

"Sit down, men, it's only one of your own officers."

All eyes turn towards the new-comer. It is Moses Walling, the pet jester and story-teller of the regiment.

Moses is hours late ; Moses has vine-leaves in his hair ; but Moses is the captain of his fate ; there is only one Moses. Nobody ever thinks of arresting Moses. How could one arrest a face like that ? How could one listen to that unctuous voice and keep a stern brow ?

Moses comes to the table, lights his pipe, tells Dagan that he is in a disgusting state of insobriety, and then says : " That reminds me."

When anything reminds Moses the whole company sit in a state of hungry silence and wait for the story. I have known many actors since that day ; many humorists, many mimics ; but I have never met the master of Private Moses Walling of the Ramchunders. He could keep a guard awake and laughing all night long. He could bring before us the strange characters he had met in Afghanistan and India. He could imitate British officers, Afridi horse-thieves, Hindoo beggars, pawky Highlanders, or Parsee merchants, and work them up into wild and side-splitting stories without ever stopping to think. He was a walking Arabian Nights Entertainment ; he could charm the Tommies as the Pied Piper charmed the children. Oh, rare Moses ! And he died so sadly—many years ago.

To show the lengths to which the mad humour of Moses carried him, and the amazing latitude allowed him, I will " put in " two stories : one told of, and the other by, this maker of much laughter.

Moses was absent, was three days absent, when, by bad luck, he ran against his captain in town. The captain, who was a strict and overbearing man, halted Moses and ordered him to return to barracks and report himself to the sergeant of the guard as a prisoner. Moses saluted and marched off. But—but he went instead to the captain's quarters, asked for the captain's wife, told her he had been doing some work for the captain, who had told him to go to his house for a bottle of whisky. He got the whisky, and remained another day absent.

When the captain came home his wife mentioned the whisky.

" Edward, what a lot of whisky to give a man, and he seemed to have had enough without it."

" Whisky !" said the captain. " What do you mean ? "

When the captain heard his wife's story he asked for the name of the soldier. But the lady did not know the name.

" My dear," she said, " it is that man with the big eyes who is always laughing."

The next day Moses made eyes at the colonel and got off lightly, and the captain stood by and did not give him away. But as they left the orderly-room the captain called Moses, and, giving him a hard stare, said: "Private Walling, you will pay my wife for a bottle of whisky. You are the man with the big eyes who is always laughing."

Such was the luck of Moses. Any other man would have been tried by court-martial.

Now let Moses tell his own tale, as he told it in the guard-room at Bembridge Fort in the young brave days when the drum lured lovers from their sweethearts' arms and the fife outsang the lark.

"Did any of you know Captain Podd? He was adjutant out in the Punjaub, and we called him Pepper-Podd on account of his pleasant temper.

"Well, I was a sergeant then, and in K company, along with Pat Daly and Colour-Sergeant Springer; and we were a thirsty lot.

"One morning, after a wet night, the 'flag' was so sober that he couldn't stand, and I had to report him absent from musketry parade.

"When I gave in my report, 'Colour-Sergeant Springer absent, sir,' the sergeant-major nearly swallowed his front teeth, and the adjutant turned green with rage.

"'Absent,' says old Pepper-Podd—'absent! Where is he?'

"'In his barrack-room, sir,' says I.

"'Then go and fetch him. What the devil do you mean? Fetch him at once!' says Pepper-Podd, and he changed colour at every word like a blooming chameleon.

"Back I went to the room, picked up Springer, carried him out pickaback to the grand parade, where the band was playing 'After Many Rorin' Years,' dumped him down like a sack of coals, propped him up against the right guide of No. 1, saluted, and gave my report: 'K Company all present, sir!'

"Well, the joy of it! Old Podd and the commandin' officer and the sergeant-major were struck speechless—as speechless as Springer. They just stood and glared at us—like this; and all the while Springer was slipping, slipping and collapsing against the right marker, until he sat down in a heap with a smirk—like this. It was a tremendous moment. You could have heard a feather fall. Then—then Captain Pepper-Podd spoilt the effect. Dear, dear, dear, his language was positively low. If you'll believe me, corp'l, it was profane, absolutely profane."

Here Moses swore in dumb show, and the guard-room shook with laughter.

"And what happened to you, Moses?" I asked.

Moses put on a tragic look. "Happened! It was a mercy I wasn't struck dead. But I was spared. I lost my stripes, of course; so did the 'flag'; but we expected that. We knew it was our day, and we made a good show. Dear old Springer; his bright smile haunts me still!"

With a side-splitting imitation of the smile Moses retires with the honours of war, and we became aware of old Tim Doyle, who is asking in his deep voice: "Look at here. What for are the Rooshians massing troops on the Austrian border? Tell me that!"

Nobody tells him that. Nobody ever takes notice of Tim; and Tim is quite happy, and continues his political lecture until he is interrupted by the arrival of Andy White. Andy rolls in and makes a speech, in which he deplores the sad tendency of the men of his regiment to drink beer. Andy is pained, and wonders "however they can sup it." Andy reports that Private Harry Neild, of our company, has taken too much beer, and has fallen asleep in a puddle at the foot of Bembridge Down. Such conduct, Private White declares, is discreditable to the regiment and to the service. At the same time Private White feels it his duty to remark that unless Private Neild is rescued he will be dead in the morning and the company will be disgraced.

Well, I was only a boy, and a boy of six months' service. I went down the hill in the rain and wind and found my man, helpless, in a pool of muddy water. I dragged him out, and I dragged and carried and pushed him up the slippery side of that Dutch-cheese down in the teeth of the gale; and the men of the guard sat by the fire and drank coffee while I did it. One sometimes is not over-wise at twenty, and a boy who has only been three weeks a lance-corporal may not be master of his situation.

Five years later the guard would have carried Private Neild up on a stretcher, and I should have sat by the fire and drunk the coffee. Thus do we live and learn.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE APOLOGY.

Let no civilian imagine that in these papers, or in any novel or story, he has seen the British Army and the British soldier as they are, or, rather, were.

The Army has never been presented as it is in any book or paper, and never can be. The common speech of the barrack-

room in my time was unprintable. Don't let me mislead you, dear reader, there were many clean-spoken, and clean-living soldiers ; but—there were others.

I am not censuring the men : I am only explaining to the reader, as an honest writer should, that these sketches are not a complete picture of barrack life. The author has left out more than he has put in.

Soldiers are fine fellows. They are manly, good-natured, ingenuous ; but, frankly, realistic portrait-painting, as I could do it, is out of the question. I said I do not blame the soldiers. It is not the men who are blamable ; it is the life. Kipling speaks of "single men in barracks." It is to the last word we must turn for the trouble. *Barrack life is bad.*

Barrack life will be always bad. It is never good for a lot of men to live together apart from home influences and feminine influences. It is not good for women to live or work in communities of women. The sexes react upon each other ; each provides for the other a natural restraint, a wholesome incentive.

Should universal military training ever be adopted in this country, I hope the public will resolutely refuse to allow the barrack system. It is evil. It is more evil than I dare to say ; than I should be allowed to say.

But there is another bad thing in barrack life ; and that is the promiscuous lodging of good and bad men together. In civil life a man may choose his company ; in barrack life, the soldier cannot choose his companions.

Now, I have seen home service and garrison life all through. I know it inside and out. To a literary man or to a student of human nature it is deeply interesting, instructive, fascinating. But it cannot be told.

The barracks and the garrison town are not good for young men, and are certainly not good for the Army. The young soldier, fenced and hemmed in by a discipline unnecessarily severe, and often stupid, has at the same time an amount of license which is dangerous to all but those of strong good sense and strong will. I have seen clean, good, nice boys come into the Army and go to the devil in less than a year. I am no Puritan. I am a man of the world ; but any sensible and honest man who has been in the Army will know at once that what I am saying is entirely true, and is the truth expressed with much restraint and moderation. A few hours in a barrack-room would teach a civilian more than all the soldier stories ever written.

When I joined the Army I was unusually unsophisticated for a boy of twenty. I had been brought up by a mother. I

had attended Sunday-school and chapel. I had lived a quiet, sheltered life, and I had an astonishing amount to learn.

The language of the barrack-room shocked me, appalled me. I could not understand half I heard ; I could not credit much that I saw.

When I began to realise the truth, I took my courage in both hands and went about the world I had come into with open eyes. So I learnt the facts, but I must not tell them.

One other word of apology. If the reader expected in these articles any coherent account of my "life in the Army," he will have been disappointed. But in this matter I resemble the needy knife-grinder : I have no tale to tell. I enlisted ; I served my time ; and I left the Army. That is all my Army history. I liked the Army, and I had a good time, for I was lucky. I made many friends, and learnt many things not taught in the schools. But a mere detailed narrative of my doings and sayings would not have proved interesting.

Therefore, I have tried instead to sketch a few of the characters of the men I met, and to give some kind of a picture of a part of the barrack life. The colours are toned down ; the shadows are lightened ; much of the essential detail is suggested only. It is not possible to tell real soldier stories to a mixed audience.

I have not described a garrison dance-room ; I have not described the canteen ; I have not faithfully reported the conversations of the "Ramchunders." I dare not. But I have done the best I can do under the inevitable restrictions.

Still, I am glad I saw and heard what I did see and hear ; I am glad that my own knowledge is first-hand knowledge ; and, as Sergeant Thomas Ison prophesied, I have "never regretted entering the Service."

SUPPLEMENTARY.

I.

THE GERMAN ARMY.

I have been asked many times, since I had the honour of attending the German and British Army manœuvres last autumn, to make a comparison between the German soldiers and our own. I have declined to do this because, in the first place, I have not the needful experience to make the attempt; and, in the second place, because it seems to me that such a comparison, if it were advisable at all, ought not to be drawn by an English or a German pen.

But there is no harm in my saying that, as far as my little knowledge and very slight experience enable me to judge, the German Army is thoroughly well organised, highly trained, and efficient; and that the Germans, as soldiers and as men, are very excellent fellows—steady, plucky, smart, and good-humoured.

And I should like to add here—though it has little or nothing to do with the case—that the German people seem to me a very homely, kindly, sensible, and hospitable people; that their houses are distinguished by elegance and comfort, and that many of their cities are amongst the handsomest and cleanest in the world.

Last September, as I sat at my window in a pretty street of lovely old-world Mergentheim, I saw the infantry of the First Bavarian Army Corps arrive after a long march over heavy roads. It was the real, right thing.

Company after company they went marching on. Fine, upright, agile, brown-skinned soldiers in light-blue uniforms with helmets cased in canvas, rifles at an accurate slope, trousers coated with mud to the hips. A score of miles those men had marched through mud and rain, and not one of them limped, not one of them looked weary. The faces, resembling each other like the faces of brothers, wore the stolid, reticent, soldier expression. The men were singularly even in height, and singularly equal in weight. They marched with a long, firm, swinging stride, the tramp-tramp of their feet sounding as regular as machinery. Their time was good, their dressing was good, and they swung round the corners perfectly. As rank followed rank and company followed company and regiment followed regiment the effect was most impressive; they looked like Fate. There was no bands; not even a drum beating; and the villagers round the fountain and at the windows looked on in admiring and respectful silence. Not

a hand was raised, not a cheer was heard, and every officer and soldier looked straight to his front, and marched, marched, marched.

Later I saw the German troops at work and at play. I was impressed by their efficiency, and by their good humour. Moving as I did, by night and day, amongst an army of some 125,000 of all arms I never once saw a German soldier the worse for drink; I never heard of any case of misconduct or insubordination. One night a Prussian Army Corps marched through the village, passing right under my window. They marched steadily and well, and as they marched they sang. They sang German folk-songs, and sang well; they have fine sonorous voices. The songs are sung in a peculiar fashion. The first half-company singing the first line, the second half-company singing the next line, and so on, the song being tossed, as it were, in stanzas from front to rear; but when the chorus comes, and a whole battalion gives tongue, the windows rattle, and one feels one's blood leaping to the surge of the song and the rhythm of the tramping feet. Our soldiers do not sing as much, nor as well, nor such good songs as the Germans; but of that hereafter.

During those manœuvres I saw the German troops under favourable and adverse conditions. I saw them in good weather and in bad. I saw them fresh and alert, and I saw them weary, but determined. They are fine fellows. One day, while we were out in our motor-car, some Red divisions arrived after forced marches.

All the way from Mainz and Hanau these poor lads had tramped, and—little wonder—they were badly "baked." Regiment after regiment we passed, and all were mud-stained and weary. Many of them could hardly drag their tired feet along. Most of them limped. Their faces were drawn and thin. They had rings around their heavy eyes, but they shut their teeth and plodded on. I know. I have done it.

They were good-humoured, too. The German soldier is always good-humoured. And they did their best to put a good face on a hard case. Doggedly they tramped along under their heavy burdens.

What a sight it was! The roads were crowded with trotting squadrons of cavalry, ox-waggon, field-kitchens, hurrying messengers and aides-de-camp, lumbering trains of country carts, long lines of artillery with their guns, panting motor-bicycles, snorting motor-cars; and through the crush and scramble the stubborn Baden infantry came plodding on.

How many of them we saw I cannot even guess. We passed right through two divisions on the Red right, and elbowed our

way by battery after battery of field guns and heavy howitzers, and squadron after squadron of Uhlans and Dragoons. And once, at a quaint old bridge, narrow and roach-backed, we got into a pretty mix and nearly came to grief. A medley of ox-wains, field-kitchens, and baggage-carts were all jammed together in the angles of the road. The Baden Jägers were crossing the bridge by walking on the parapets, and the artillery were coming over the centre of the bridge and squeezing past our motor-car on the right. And at the window of a roadside inn three little flaxen-haired children stood, staring with wide-blue eyes, and waving their chubby pink hands to the marching host.

As for us we were locked in a crush. There was not room to move. Not a foot could the motor-car go back or forward. Once the nose of a great howitzer swung round and crumpled up our fore mud-guard. The artillery officer smilingly apologised. The tired little Jägers laughed. As for me, I was greatly amused. I expected every minute to find myself in the stream.

One of the most impressive sights of these manœuvres was the airship Gross II., which sailed above the battlefield one afternoon.

"There is the Gross!" cried my companion. And he and I looked up and saw the vessel some 600 yards above the hills, swimming and turning among thin, fleecy clouds like a great shark or grampus in transparent water. It was an arresting vision, that of the new aerial monster, the warship and messenger of the future.

To see that great tawny gold monster vanish into the mist and reappear suddenly with the light shining on its dorsal fin and the wireless telegraph trailing behind, like tentacles or antennæ, was a new and somewhat disconcerting experience.

We shall see more of these aerial monsters in the near future.

No. I will not attempt comparisons. The Duke of Wellington, being asked by King George if the English cavalry were not the best in the world, replied: "The French are very good, sir." And, being pressed again and again, returned only that answer: "The French are very good, sir." And I will not rush in where the Iron Duke declined to tread, but will content myself with saying: "The Germans are very good, sir."

May the day never dawn when the Germans and the British, so much akin in sentiment and in tradition, shall meet as enemies in a wrong cause to hate and kill and maim each other in a needless and a useless war!

But, come what may, the Germans, soldiers and civilians, women and men, are very good, sir!

II.

THE NEW SOLDIERS AND THE OLD.

Readers of this rough and ready history must not make the mistake of regarding it as an attempt to portray the British soldier as he is. I left the Army more than thirty years ago, and much has happened since. So that when I was sent, last September, fresh from the German manœuvres, and full of respect and admiration for the German troops, to report the British manœuvres in Oxfordshire, I was very curious as to the changes in our Army since my time, and somewhat anxious also as to the impression our soldiers would make upon me after what I had just seen.

I was immensely relieved and encouraged by what I saw. To begin with, I met the First Brigade as they marched in.

The First Brigade is composed of the 1st Grenadier Guards, the 1st Coldstream Guards, the 2nd West Yorkshires, and the 2nd Welsh Borderers. They had marched some five-and-twenty miles; and came in, as General Grierson put it, "with their chins up, singing."

The men looked fine and fit, and there were no stragglers, and no passengers in the carts; not a lame duck in the brigade. I was interested in this force, for I had just seen a good deal of the German troops in the field, and I had not seen any British troops for many years. They appeared to me to be really first-class infantry; and I compared them in my mind with the German infantry I saw last week and the British infantry I saw a quarter of a century ago.

These men are better soldiers than the men of the 'seventies. They look more intelligent, more alert, keener at their work. I should say, from their appearance, that they are steadier men than those I served with. I did not see a single "canteen face" in my day's ride.

They were quite fresh and cheerful after their long march, and looked, to use an historic phrase, "fit to go anywhere and do anything."

If the troops I saw in the Vale of the White Horse can shoot as well as they can do other things, they are fit to face any other troops in the world. I speak of that which I see. There may still remain much to criticise in the British Army, but before one can pose as a critic one must know the facts.

There is a fashion—one of the humours that reign in Englishmen—to disparage the British soldier. But the British have always been a great fighting race, and the British soldier has

records of which any army might be proud. Make the best of British material, and there will be none better.

The army was well-served and well-handled. There was never a hitch. The immense volume of baggage and other impedimenta necessary to an army of 50,000 men had been promptly and efficiently dealt with, and the roads were clear for the passage of the troops. Anyone with the most rudimentary knowledge of military affairs will appreciate the significance of this fact. It is a fact highly creditable to the Headquarter Staff and to the officers in control of the transport.

But the chief cause of satisfaction was the conduct and appearance of the officers and men. On that point there was only one opinion among the experienced and able correspondents who represented the Press. The men are splendid, that was the unanimous verdict.

The men are sober, steady, clean, and intelligent, they have the confidence and respect of their officers, and of the civilians with whom they have come in contact.

The change in our soldiers since I had the honour to serve may be emphasised by a comparison. All Londoners know the difference between the London cabman and the London chauffeur. There is the same difference between the soldiers of the 'seventies and the soldiers now engaged in the manœuvres.

The new men are steadier, better educated, keener, brighter, and younger. The London cabby was in many ways lovable; so was the hard-drinking, hard-swearing, hard-fighting old soldier. But education is better than ignorance, and drink is no use to men who have hard or serious work to do. The younger generation, civilians as well as soldiers, drink less and think more.

Kipling is a man of genius, but he has done a great deal to prejudice the British soldier in the eyes of the public. The amusing young "Tommy" of the "Barrack Room Ballads" and "Soldiers Three" is the exception and not the rule in our Army. The real soldier is not so illiterate nor so immoral as Kipling represents him, and he never was theatrical.

The men here are fine, straight-limbed, well-set, clear-eyed fellows. I venture to say there is no better material extant. No pains should be spared with them. They are worth all that can be done for them.

I was struck by the physique and smartness of a half-battalion of the Northhamptons, who had been holding a position outside Faringdon. The Manchesters also looked very fine and fit; and the artillery—officers, men, and horses

appear to be admirable. Some of the marching done by our infantry deserves recognition. The detached wing of the Blues on Monday marched twenty miles in five hours. Some of the regiments have marched seventy-five miles in three days. So good is the condition of these troops that any regiment will march twenty miles in good time and come up fit to take part in a severe engagement.

In fact, we had there a British striking force of 50,000 men who would be hard to match by an equal number of troops from any first-class Continental army. Of course, a very great deal depends on marksmanship, and of the marksmanship of the modern British soldier I know nothing.

About nine o'clock one night I had the good luck to see the finest sight of the manœuvres. Hearing a considerable amount of cheering, I hastened down the street, and arrived in time to see the Seventh Brigade of the Fourth Division of the Blue Army march through Swindon to entrain for Portsmouth. This brigade is composed of the 1st Leicesters, the 1st Cornwalls, the 2nd Oxfords, and the 1st North Staffords. They had been at work, and hard at work, in the field since early morning, and had now marched eleven miles into Swindon. They were clean and trim, and might, from their appearance, have just turned out fresh for parade.

They came along at a swinging pace, marching at the rate of fully five miles an hour, and singing as they marched. These troops belonged to the defeated army, and they signified the fact with characteristic good humour. Each company as it came swinging up the hill cried out in chorus: "Are we down-hearted? No!" And the Leicesters sang a popular song, of which the refrain runs somewhat as follows:

"You never know you've got it till you get it.
If you get it don't kick up a row.
If anybody's ever going to get it,
We've got it now."

It was almost dark in the street, and the crowd was lined up densely on both sides, leaving just room for the sections of fours to pass. There was no music of any kind; only the hum of conversation, the ringing voices of the soldiers, and the rapid tramp of feet. As the column strode swiftly past a murmur of surprise and excited admiration arose from the spectators.

The men were so supremely fit, so lustily cheerful. They looked as if they could march over houses. I have never seen soldiers so bright and vigorous after a hard day's work.

I have never seen any troops in full marching order march at such a pace. Their swing and go, their high spirits, and fine order were contagious, and the spectators cheered them with enthusiasm. It was a great sight. If our race is degenerate, what of these ?

The race is not degenerate ! We could easily increase this fine force of 50,000 to an equally fine force of half a million. Young England is sound, and will prove it upon emergency, if given a chance. So we oldsters went back to our pipes and our criticism, filled with pride and contentment. This march was indeed one of the most cheering and inspiring sights I have had the fortune to see in many years. If our boys are of such metal, the race is still puissant and full of great possibilities, and the future may be faced with confidence.

Also I have to say, emphatically, that a training which produces such results is good for any youth, and that the nation would be richer materially and morally if every English boy could be so trained. My colleague and I were greatly cheered and delighted by the sight of the splendid young manhood of that brigade. We would have gone hundreds of miles to see it. We felt ten years younger for the sight. And we deplored the lot of the multitude of young men cooped up in smoky towns, tied to a dull round of labour at desk, or bench, or loom, or counter ; growing old before their time.

"It was *grand*," said my colleague, as we walked back to our hotel ; "the old country isn't played out yet !" And as he spoke I heard again the ringing, merry challenge : "Are we down-hearted ? No !"

III.

A WOMAN'S IMPRESSION.

I think it will make a graceful and quaint ending to this book if I print here the impressions of a lady who was not born when I wore the scarlet and laughed and marvelled over the men of the Ramchunders.

The following article was written by my daughter, who accompanied me during the campaign of the Vale of the White Horse. If it seems rather enthusiastic that may perhaps be excused in a lady who is my daughter, and has always heard soldiers spoken of in her own home and family in terms of affectionate esteem.

WITH THE TROOPS.

BY WINIFRED BLATCHFORD.

Tommy Atkins is grand! I met some forty or fifty thousands of him last week at the English manœuvres, and now I do not know which I love most—the Army or the Navy.

The Tommies are so unaffected, modest, and straight—all man, save, perhaps, for what is imp and child. And the officers are strong, gallant, and handsome; clean, hard, and clever. Nothing petty or feeble, just fine, healthy men, with some brain and muscle and heart to them. If I were a man I would raise my hat to every Tommy in the ranks and every officer in command, and hand round my best cigars. As it is, I smiled my Sunday smile and sometimes even waved my hand as the long lines of khaki-clad heroes marched past our motor-car in the country lanes.

On Tuesday morning we tore through the fresh green and yellow country of Oxford, looking for the troops. Our car was a "goer," and though the Army is a marvel at hiding, we eventually discovered a portion of it, and were held up at a forked road, where I experienced the most electric and thrilling hour of my life.

We sat at the fork of the road in the car, and watched the great wing of a great Army go by. For miles along the lanes that wind and twist round the fields and the foot of downs we could see men coming. Like a dark ribbon curled round the green and golden fields between the red-berried hedges, the great procession passed. Infantry and cavalry divisions filling the lanes. On and on they came, a seemingly endless line of fine manhood, strength and grit and cheery goodwill in every inch of them. Life Guards, Hussars, and Grenadiers. Grand they looked! And I felt like a bottle of champagne with the cork just liberated.

Since dawn these men had been hard at work. They had just won a victory, and had been marching and fighting and skirmishing for days, and sleeping in the open, some of them for weeks. And here they came, rising and falling in the saddle, with chins up and shoulders squared, as graceful and beautifully poised, and as smart and clean as any lady in Rotten Row.

It was a great sight! To see the endless line of men, winding for miles down the lanes and across the downs, to have them pass one in all their strength, to hear the clink of curb-chains, see the flash of burnished spurs, and the restive toss of the horses' heads and the powerful rear of their bodies



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—to see and hear all this on a fresh, sunny morning, in a peaceful country lane flanked by downs and valleys with the early mist upon them, is a sight to thank life for! Ah, how it sets the blood rushing through the veins, and the pulses, usually so steady, doing war dances! I would not have missed it for all the other joys time may hold for me. But I wish I were a man!

Yes; it was weird to travel through the quiet, comfortable English country, looking at the quaint, grey old cottages veiled in scarlet creepers; passing through the hawthorn-hedges and the yellow cornfields, and in listening for the robin's autumn song, or in darting quickly round to see a flight of linnets. It was very weird indeed, and somewhat awesome, to hear above the song of birds, and the soft sigh of leaves, the quick crackle of rifle-shots or the sharp, sudden bark of the guns. It made one wonder. It suggested what *may* be some day; and somehow the smiling country changes as though a cloud passed over it, and the men who are lining the roads become very precious to one, and remind one of those who were so dear to us, and who now sleep their long sleep in the South African veldt!

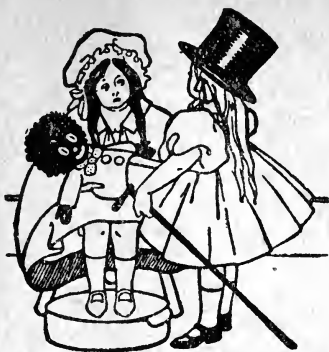
Modern warfare is a terrible thing. I never realised before how very terrible it must be, nor how wonderful. The organisation, system, and training are marvellous! Here were fifty thousand men with their baggage, guns, and horses, all working together like a beautiful machine—wheels within wheels; no fuss, no confusion, everyone quiet, calm, and, above all, smilingly courteous. It is wonderful! I have seen more excitement at a village bazaar opening than I saw in all the three days we spent with the troops.

It is remarkable, too, where they conceal themselves. We would stand on high ground and peer through our glasses into the fields below and the roads around, and we would not see so much as the rifle-end of a soldier! And yet there were thousands all around us. How *does* the enemy find them?

I have seen lines of men patiently lying under the cover of hedge and wall, firing at nothing, so far as I could tell; and learnt afterwards that there had been a great engagement, and our side had won!

It was so strange to see the long "cow" guns and the soldiers in clusters amongst the yellow haystacks; and it made one feel very strange indeed to hear the bang and whistle of shots, the clank of harness, and the ring of hoofs on the road.

One day we passed a company of soldiers resting by the roadside. They were gunners, and the cruel guns were



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drawn in long lines under the hedges, and the horses stood by with swords hung on their saddles; and in the distance the boom of cannon rang out, and the blue smoke rose in clouds. But our Tommies were resting, and some of them were reading, and others had children on their knees, and were hugging them and tickling them and giving them chocolate; and the children turned their brown, sunny faces up and rubbed cheeks with the ferocious warriors. It was beautiful to see. And once or twice, as we passed the lines, the clarion cry of "Boots!" rang out; and *that* was good to hear.

One night an officer kindly took us to see a carriage of the hospital-train. It is a beautiful thing—a long railway-coach, painted white, and spotlessly clean, hung with cots like bunks in a ship's cabin. The beds are made upon strong spring-mattresses to evade vibration when the train is moving. These trains are run as near to the scene of action as possible, and are, of course, for the wounded. Each train has six coaches, and each coach holds twelve beds, and, I believe, four couches. Then to each coach there is a kitchen, an officers' compartment, and lockers for medicines, wines, food, etc. Everything, so far as I could see, was perfect. Every inch of space had been cleverly utilised, and certainly poor Tommy would be as well cared for there as in any hospital in war-time.

The officer who acted as our guide was very interesting and very amusing, and very fearful of our being bored. Bored! If he only *knew*! I was wishing all the time that if ever that hospital-train has to be used on active service—which Heaven forbid!—I might be clever enough and good enough and brave enough to go with it and nurse the soldiers.

Maybe there is a largish drop of soldier blood in my veins. Anyhow, I know, and here declare, that I honour and respect dear Tommy Atkins in all his modest strength and queer bright humour above all other men. I drink his health in the cup o' tea by my side, and wish him peace for ever.

"And he who will not drink this health,
I wish him neither wit nor wealth,
Nor yet a rope to hang himself!"

For he is a fine man, is Thomas, and he looks fit enough and keen enough and steady enough to do anything he is called upon by a forgetful country to do. And we shall never know his sterling worth until he has to save our skins for us, and even then we shall be unable to honour him enough.

However, in the meantime we will cry, God bless him!

THE END.

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THE CRIME.

"Nita, I swear—

She shook her head, and made a weary gesture with her hand.

"It's the truth, and you know it. No, I won't trouble you, Ralph. I'll go away, quite out of your life—as I have been ever since you deserted me—and I'll never come near you or claim you."

He watched her keenly, cunningly.

"Sounds likely, doesn't it?" he said, with a sneer.

"I promise," she said; "and I keep my promises, Ralph. There is only one condition. I don't want any money—I've enough, can earn enough for myself, as I have done. All I want is that you should promise, on your part, to break off with—with the young lady you were going to deceive and betray."

He started, and thrust his hands in his pockets, glowering at her under his half-closed lids.

"Oh, that's it?" he said, with the twist of his under-lip.

"Yes," she said. "I can save her and any other girl you may attempt to lure into a false marriage. I can do that, and will do it. Give me your promise. But I don't need it. You'd break it if you could; but I'll take care you don't. While I'm alive I'll watch you."

His hand became conscious of its contact with the knife, and closed over it.

"I see," he said. "You'll play the spy on me—you'll dog me day by day; and perhaps change your mind and, when you're short of money, blackmail me."

She raised her head, her scorn of him glowing in her dark eyes.

"I would rather die than touch a penny of yours, Ralph," she said quietly. "You may go your way, do what you please, so long as you release that poor, unhappy girl you have trapped, God knows how! for she doesn't care for you. I saw it in her face as she drove by. I've made inquiries in the town. She doesn't care for you, Ralph; she will be glad to be free."

Mechanically he had got the knife open, and his hand was closing spasmodically on the haft.

"I want to save her from you, and I will," Nita went on, in a low but resolute

voice. "Yes, even if I have to go to her and tell her the truth, as I will."

The blood rushed to his head, and the trees seemed to waver, the earth to rock in the madness of his passion.

"You will, will you?" he snarled, almost inarticulately. "You will?"

Warned by the terrible look in his blood-shot eyes, by the stealthy movement of his right hand, she recoiled and uttered a faint cry. He sprang upon her, with the knife uplifted, and stabbed at her twice, blindly, but with terrible force. One stab would have been enough, but even as she threw up her arms and fell, he struck again with mad and brutish rage, and so wildly that, as she dropped at his feet, the knife flew from his hand.

He stood above her, panting, his teeth clenched, his eyes blazing, scarcely conscious for the moment of what had happened, what he had done. Then suddenly he realised it.

"Nita!" he cried hoarsely. "Nita! Get up! I—I didn't mean— Why did you nag at me, and raise the devil in me? I didn't mean—"

Then he dropped on his knees beside her, and felt for her heart. As he did so, his hands grew wet, and he shrank back and looked from the hand to the sightless eyes upturned to the sky, as if mutely denouncing him, as if appealing to Him who has said vengeance is His.

He staggered to his feet, and, leaning against a tree, tried not to look at the face again; but his eyes seemed drawn to it by some irresistible power. Presently he awoke to the deadly peril in which he stood. Every moment he remained there that peril increased. He must fly, and at once. But it was some minutes before he could move, for the face held him by a loathsome fascination; and when at last he moved from the spot, he still looked over his shoulder at his victim.

He had not got a dozen yards before he remembered the knife, and, with a start, pulled up. He forced himself to go back for it, and searched for it, with shaking hands, but he failed to find it; and, with the sweat breaking from every pore, he rose and fled into the thick darkness of the wood.

(This incident is taken from Charles Garvice's fascinating romance "A Heritage of Hate," now published in the "Daily Mail" Sixpenny Novels.)

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IN THE HOUSE OF THE MORPHINEUSE

'Quantities of great cushions were scattered over these divans, and on them were sitting and lying women—the *morphinomanes*. There must have been eight or nine of them. Of course they were all different, and yet, in a way, they were all alike. They were all alike because they were all waiting to have the morphia put into them.'

'How disgusting!' exclaimed Felix.

'They were sitting or lying there almost like dead people, staring at each other in the firelight with hollow, expressionless eyes. Such eyes! They seemed to be looking out of caverns at something a very long way off. Two or three of these women were trembling, almost as if they had convulsions. One kept on opening and shutting her two hands as if she were keeping time to music. Another was holding an unlit cigarette between her teeth and stretching out her arms. There was a girl in one corner crying dreadfully, almost howling. She terrified Alice. . . .

'I went to Carrie and asked her to come away. I begged and prayed her to come. She wouldn't. The other women took no notice of us. They were all looking towards one side of the room where there was a door partly covered with a curtain. I found out afterwards that this door led into the room of the *morphineuse*. I made quite a scene with Carrie, but it was all no use. She only pushed me away, when I stood in front of her, and said, "Let me see the door, will you?" At last I was in despair, and I went back towards Alice. I don't quite know what I meant to do. I think I meant to make Alice try if she could persuade Carrie. But there was no time, for just then the door of the *morphineuse* opened.'

Mrs. Ismay paused. Felix could see that her eyes were gleaming with excitement. As she went on with her story her vivacity of manner had increased. She was sitting almost upright against the cushions, and pressing them with her two hands.

'A lot of light shone in all over the room, and a woman came towards us. Oh, Felix, she looked so happy! Perhaps it was the contrast between her and all the other women that—no, it wasn't, though—anywhere you would have been struck by her. She walked as if she were on air, so easily and lightly, and she looked as young as a schoolgirl. Her lips were bright red, and her eyes were shining. But I had hardly time to see her, for all the women sprang up from the divans like mad creatures, and rushed towards the *morphineuse*, who came to the threshold of the room just then. They were all screaming to her to let them come in next. They cried out, "It's my turn! It's my turn!" They even pushed against each other, and tried to drag each other away so as to be first.'

'Not Lady Caroline surely!' said Felix, scarcely able to believe that she was speaking the truth.

'Yes, Carrie was one of the most violent.'

'And the *morphineuse*—what was she like?'

'She was a wrinkled old woman. She had a lamp in her hand and a dirty shawl wrapped round her, and she stood there looking after the woman who had just come out with a smile, as if she was pleased with the result of what she had done.'

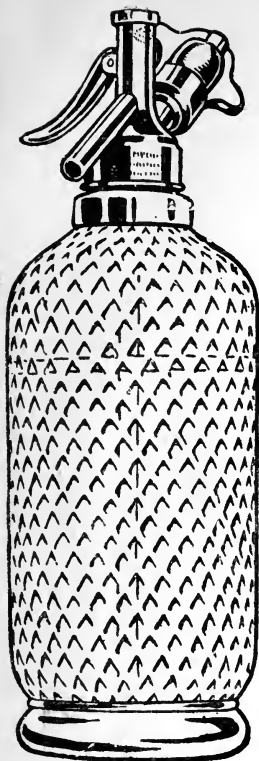
'Old beast!' muttered Felix, under his breath.

'She didn't take the slightest notice of all the screaming, hustling women at first, but when she did she chose Carrie.'

'And you couldn't do anything?'

'I tried to. But if you had seen those women! They were ready to tear each other to pieces. I was frightened at last, and I ran back to Alice. As the door of the *morphineuse* shut I heard Carrie saying, "Three *figures*, Madame Virginie, three *figures*. You know you——" and that was all.'

This vivid description is taken from Robert Hichens' (Author of "The Garden of Allah") fine novel "Felix," of which a sixpenny edition is now obtainable in the well-known "Daily Mail" series.



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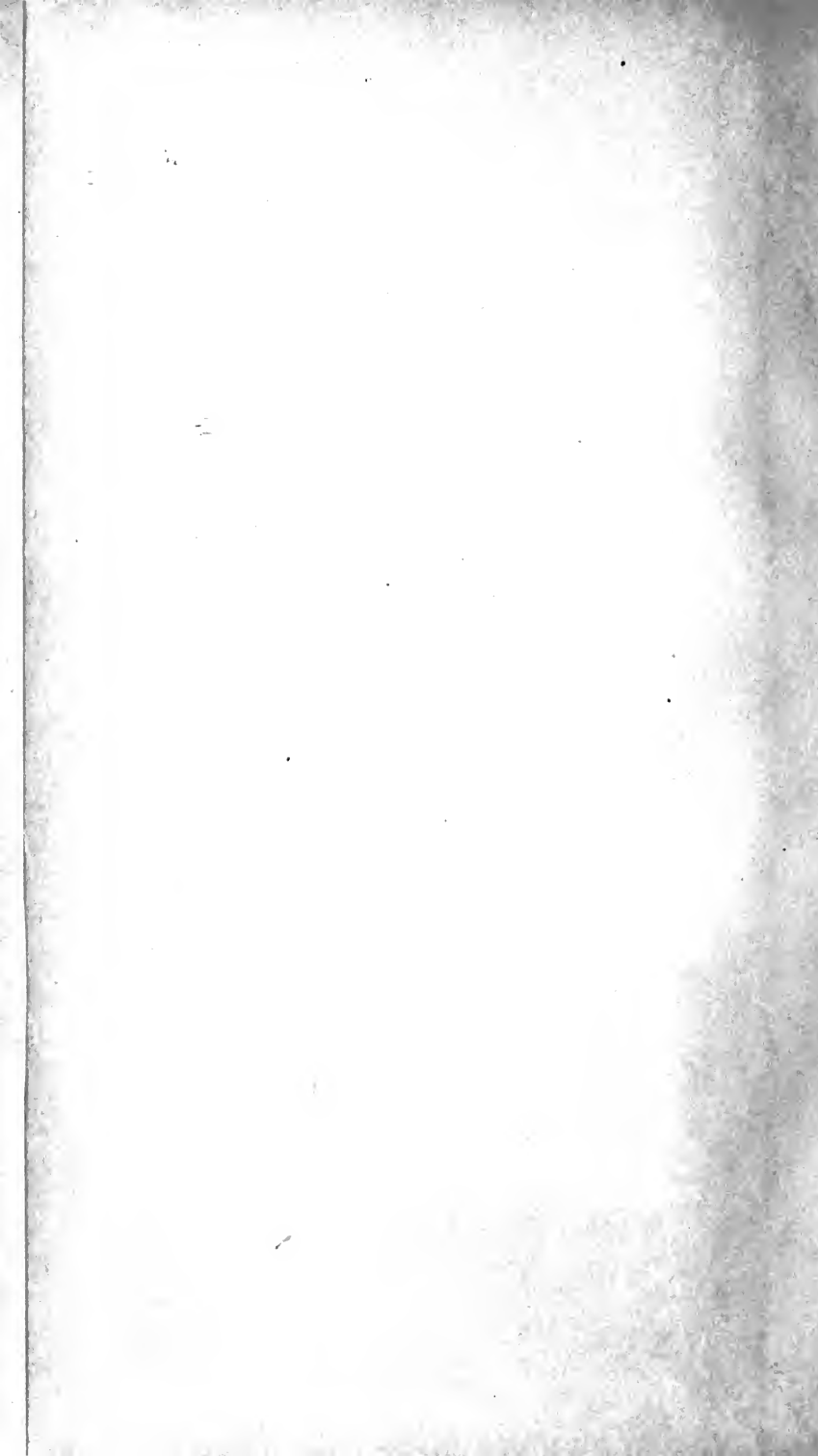
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